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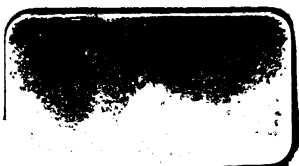
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48.1694.







THE HOME
OF
The Lost Child:

A TALE OF
—
THE ASYLUM OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD,
HAMMERSMITH.

"INVENI OVEM MEAM QUE PERIERAT."

London:
C. DOLMAN, 61, NEW BOND STREET.

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MDCCCXLVIII.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE chief object of the following tale is to make known the true nature of the Order of the "Good Shepherd," and the working of the Magdalen Asylum under the care of the Religious. The ground-work of the story is a fact which has come under the writer's own observation. This does not of course mean that the whole is to be understood as an exact narrative of events, but merely that the foundation of the story is a fact ; and moreover, that in no instance is the writer conscious of having exaggerated in the scenes and conversations here recorded. To give a true idea, and not to write a romantic story,

has been the aim of the writer throughout. At the same time, especial care has been taken to mention nothing which could in any wise affect the character or feelings of any individual now living. If it be alleged that the example chosen is a singular instance of God's mercy, the writer has only to say that, however extraordinary in some of its circumstances, the main features of the *conversion* are common enough in the Asylums of the "Good Shepherd."

It should be added, that the tale is written by one of the Religious of the "Order of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd."

HAMMERSMITH,

June 21st, 1848.



CHAPTER THE FIRST.




The Convent.

"She once was a lady of honour and wealth,
Bright glow'd in her features the roses of health,
Her vesture was blended of silk and of gold,
And her motion shook perfume from every fold.

"She felt in her spirit the summons of grace,
That call'd her to live for the suffering race;
And heedless of pleasure, of comfort, of home,
Rose quickly, like Mary, and answered, 'I come.'

"Forgot in the halls is that high sounding name,
For the Sister of Charity blushes at fame;
Forgot are the claims of her riches and birth,
For she barters for heaven the glory of earth."

Vide "*The Sister of Charity.*"

" AN you show me the way to the Convent, friend?" said a tall military looking man, of middle age, in the village of Hammersmith, during the spring of 184—, to a passing workman. "Opposite to where you stand, sir," replied the artisan, touching his hat, and the gentleman crossed the road and rang the bell of a large red brick house, over

the walls of which some trees were seen just budding into life. The courteous and kind nun who acted as portress, replied to Captain Ambrose's question (for this is the name by which we shall call the gentleman), that this was *not* the Convent of the Good Shepherd, but the Benedictine Convent. "You will not," said she, "have much difficulty in finding the other Convent. If you will go round the corner to the left, and walk on till you come opposite the old church. This is King-street: you must turn your back, as it were, to London, and leave the Richmond-road to your right. You will turn again to your left when you get to the old church, and soon arrive at a public-house, and there you must take the right hand turning, which will bring you to the Convent of the Good Shepherd. It is situated in Fulham-lane, and any one will show you the house. If you should be at a loss ask for Beauchamp Lodge, as sometimes it is better known by the name it had before the present order was founded there." The Captain thanked the obliging nun, and bowing with much respect, as well on account of her holy habit as for the trouble she had taken in directing him, followed her instructions, and soon arrived at a

large new looking building with an iron cross over the gate, and another on the house. He rang the Convent bell, and as he waited to be let in, he half muttered, half thought, "Oh my God! it is a heavy cross laid on a father's heart. Had it been Thy holy will, I would gladly have laid my Rachel in the grave ere she had lived to bring this blight upon her family, this disgrace on her sainted mother's memory! But for whatever reason Thy wisdom has permitted this degradation, it shall be borne. Perhaps I took pride in my poor Rachel's appearance, and—" his cogitations were interrupted by the little sliding-panel being drawn back, and the portress looked out.

"Can I speak with the Superioress on business?" "Have you a letter of introduction?" asked the cautious inmate of the Convent, "or will you give your name?" Whilst Captain Ambrose drew out his card-case, the portress replaced the sliding-panel, and opened the Convent door. Ushered into the neat little parlour, our friend gave his card, and was politely told by the portress that the Superioress was engaged at that moment, but she would tell her that a gentleman wished to speak to her on

business. Sister Mary Joseph, the portress, saw that the gentleman was in trouble, and with the simple delicacy of a pious uncultivated mind, placed what *she thought* the most entertaining book in the house before the visitor, saying, she thought Reverend Mother would very soon be able to come to him. Captain Ambrose looked over the list of subscribers in the book given him to read, and mechanically repeated some noble names who had given to a noble work, sums which did honour to their rank, and other names of less weight, though perhaps, before God, of greater merit, for having given their "mite," but his heart was far away, with the guilty and suffering—his daughter Rachel, the only child of his beloved Theresa, who in giving birth to this infant had rendered her pure soul to God. Captain Ambrose had married again, and was the father of four other children, a son and three daughters, but Rachel was the child of his affections, the sweet deposit a most virtuous mother had left to his tender care, and for some twelve years the companion and playmate of her doating father. At his second marriage, she had been sent to a convent to finish her education, which, owing to the want of a mother's care, had

been sadly neglected; and for five years she returned home only during the holidays. At seventeen years of age she was introduced into the gay world, thrown into the military society incidental to her father's moving with his regiment, and what wonder, so much separated from her mother-in-law, there should be little cordiality or affection between them? They lived on polite terms, but without confidence. Beautiful and light-hearted, the pride of her father, sought for by all who wished to give *éclat* to their entertainments, with a remarkable talent for music, and a rich cultivated voice, it is not to be supposed that Rachel was long without contracting some feelings of vanity and self-esteem. Let us draw a veil over the sad and tragic scene which followed with Rachel, in this important era of woman's life. Flattered by the notice of one of much higher rank than her father's position and fortune could reasonably claim as an alliance for his daughter, the splendid match Miss Ambrose was going to make was first the talk of the military station where her unfortunate acquaintance with Lord Henry Greenwood was made; the removal of Lord Henry's regiment, her flight, and the disgrace attending it, next occupied the gossips of

C——, and after a few pitying remarks on her bereaved father, the belle of the town, the admired of the admired, was scarcely ever thought of by the giddy numbers who live only for the present. Such is the world; and Captain Ambrose having obtained a change of station, none but his affectionate wife saw how deep the furrows on his high forehead were grown, nor how in a few months his iron grey hair had become snow white. At the age of forty-five, he felt an old man, and it was the thought only of his four young children, the eldest his dear boy, only seven, which supported him under this withering blow.

But we have left the poor gentleman long enough in the parlour of the Convent. The Superioress and Assistante entered. Having pronounced the words enjoined by their rule, "*Dieu soit béni!*" the Reverend Mother, with much grace and kindness, begged Captain Ambrose to be seated. As he did not speak, she in very clear and good English, but with a slight foreign accent, raised her eyes, and said: "You inquired for the Superioress on business, and I am sorry I could not come before, but I was making arrangements for the reception of a pos-

tulant ; I am sorry to have detained you." " I am in no hurry. I have come to town from Portsmouth for a friend, who desires to place his daughter under your good care. The Rev. Mr. Rignum, the priest of Portsmouth, informed him of the nature of your Establishment. I believe you receive into your Convent females who have forfeited their good name in the world." How the father's heart swelled as he spoke, but courage ! it *must* be done. " Not into the Convent, sir," replied the Superioress, " but into the Asylum, which is governed by the religious of this order. But if the gentleman who has commissioned you to make inquiries is a friend of yours, his daughter, I should think, would not be of that class of society we receive, and she would probably have much pain and difficulty in mixing with our poor rough penitents. It is the children of the poor and uneducated we devote ourselves to, as being the most despised and abandoned of all creatures." " My daughter," began Captain Ambrose, and stopped short, his whole face suffused with scarlet. The Superioress raised her eyes, and that one intelligent look showed the poor father he was discovered ; but there was only a momentary pause whilst he recovered

himself, and the Reverend Mother again continued, her eyes cast down after the keen and thoughtful look which Captain Ambrose had met and shrunk from : "The young lady in question must herself be consulted. We *have* received persons of superior birth and education occasionally : they necessarily enter for a true course of penance in consequence of the class they must mix with ; if they have a generous and noble spirit, and are really touched by the grace of God, *it is* possible to bear the life of self-denial which they encounter here. We can receive none, however, unless they come *voluntarily*. She must say on coming here, that she wishes to come, or our rule prohibits her entry. Will you tell your friend this, and say, that if his daughter will take up her cross, and follow the steps of our Divine Redeemer, who spent *His* life amongst rude fishermen, she shall be heartily welcome, and we will try to make her happy." Captain Ambrose thought this must have been the lesson this lady early learned, or she would not be here. He then asked, "Do you, madam, ever have any intercourse with the penitents." "Not as often as I could wish, for I love them very much ; but I have the community to attend to,

and the Convent to guide. From time to time, however, I can see any of the penitents who desire it, and they have their own mistresses, nuns chosen from the community for that purpose, who are like mothers to them : indeed they call us all by that title, and we call them children."—"How long do they remain here, and what are their duties? Can they, madam, remain for life?"—"The usual time of residence in the Asylum allowed for each penitent is one or two years, after which they either return to their friends, or we endeavour to find respectable situations for them as servants ; but if, during that time they show a good spirit, have given satisfaction to their mistresses, and have lived amicably with their companions, they are permitted to entertain the hope that they will remain all their lives in the Asylum." "And become nuns?" asked Captain Ambrose. "No; our rule strictly forbids this. No person, of whatever fortune, rank, and talents she may be possessed, can be received into our order, if ever there has been a suspicion of her morality. We are most particular in this respect, and this condition can never be dispensed with, for obvious reasons, and such a person, though perfectly converted,

could never be a nun of the order of the Good Shepherd, in any country or climate, where we have convents. The penitents can, however, take the habit of consecration after two years, and even if they have a call for it, they can become Magdalens. The Magdalens are governed by the religious of the order of the Good Shepherd, precisely as the class of penitents are, only they take the Carmelite habit, with their rule and office, and practise many austerities which would not be permitted to the penitents. We have no Magdalens here, but in some of our convents abroad, they give great edification."

"If," said Captain Ambrose, "I do not intrude on you, I should like to ask some more questions."

The Superioress laughed a little, and said, "To you, sir, I shall be happy to give any information in my power, for I am persuaded you do not come for mere curiosity to know what we are and what we do. I confess I do not like to answer idle questions—but yours are not so." "Indeed they are not, dear lady, and there is something in the kindness and frankness of your manner which so invites my confidence, that I will own to you that I am the unhappy father of

an erring child, whom I have discovered almost by a miracle after two years' absence from my house, and this is her history." We will not repeat what the reader is already acquainted with; Captain Ambrose's discovery of his daughter was, however, so remarkable, that it will be worth recording. The last that he could hear of her was, that she was gone abroad, and two weary years passed, when at an Easter communion, Captain Ambrose imploring the Divine mercy on his poor Rachel, it came into his mind to make an offering to the Blessed Virgin if she would obtain for him from Almighty God, a knowledge of the place of his daughter's retreat, and he implored the "Virgin of Virgins" to pray for his daughter's conversion. His heart lightened of a load when his vow was made, he returned home to his family more cheerful than he had been for some time past.

"A letter for your honour," said the corporal, as he handed him the day-book after breakfast. The letter lay some time on the table, whilst the Captain played with his baby daughter, and his merry little Rose, a child of three years old, was the first to call attention to it. After romping round and round her father's chair to make the

baby laugh every time she said "bo-peep!" till she was tired, Rose said, "poor Papa can't read." "Rose can't read—don't like lessons."—"Rose put letter in fire—Rose put book in fire"—alluding to her having burned her first spelling-book, and the child was proceeding to put the unopened letter in the same place—"You little monkey! give me my letter," said her father, holding her back, and disengaging the precious epistle from her fat round hand. "Here, nurse! take the baby, and let me have some peace." The letter contained these startling words:

"Rachel is in London. She has lost her child, and is in great distress. Her address is No. —, Manchester-street, Manchester-square."

There was no signature and no date to this mysterious letter. The hand seemed disguised. Captain Ambrose went straight to the Colonel of the regiment, and obtained leave of absence for a week. Arrived at Manchester-street, he inquired of the servant if a lady lived there. "A lady!" was the rough reply; "I don't know what you mean! what's her name?—we have some gentlefolks who live here sometimes, but they have names." "My good girl, I do not know this lady's present name, but she has lately lost

her baby." "Do you mean Lady Henry Greenwood, that was always crying—oh! she left here this morning in a hackney coach. She gave her own direction to the coachman, and I did not hear it, and I don't know where she's gone," and with this she slammed the door to, and left Captain Ambrose in great anxiety on the step. "O Blessed Lady," said the agonised father, "who sought your Divine Son three days sorrowfully, look on me! direct me to my child!" He uttered this ejaculation aloud in the bitterness of his grief, when a poor clean-looking woman, who was passing, said, "if you walk down the street, you will find her."

Captain Ambrose did walk down the street mechanically, and was only roused from a reverie by the loud voice of a coachman, calling to a young lady crossing the road too near the horses' heads, "Holloa! stupid! don't you see where you're going?" and he checked his horses only just in time to prevent their running down the frightened object of his indignation. She turned towards Captain Ambrose's path, and father and daughter recognised each other, after two years separation.* "My father! my father! forgive

* A fact.

your guilty child!" said poor Rachel, throwing herself at his feet, regardless of the stare of the passers-by. The agitation of Captain Ambrose was scarcely less than that of his changed and melancholy looking daughter. "Do not spurn me, dearest father. Oh! pardon me that I may die in peace" She kissed his feet, and clung to him with convulsive energy. A crowd was gathering, and Captain Ambrose, almost choking with emotion, endeavoured to say some words of comfort to his weeping child. "Rise, my poor Rachel, all is forgiven; but let us walk on, my dear, we shall have a mob about us;" and calling to a coach which was passing, he lifted the almost fainting Rachel into it. "Please, sir, where shall I drive?" said the coachman. "To the Portsmouth Railroad"—and in a few minutes they left the gaping crowd to their own interpretation of the scene which had just passed. "Where are you living, my child," said Captain Ambrose, in a kind soft tone, for the altered appearance of his once blooming daughter went to his heart. "I have no home, father. I have put my last box of clothes in pawn, and two pounds and a few shillings is all I possess. I was seeking for needle-work, and a room if I

could get one, when we met accidentally this morning." "*Accidentally*," repeated Captain Ambrose; "I cannot think it was mere accident." There was a long pause. Both had much to say, but a strange feeling of shyness prevented either asking questions. Captain Ambrose had given the first address he thought of to escape the inquisitive glance of the people, but now he pulled the check-string as they passed a respectable looking house, where "Apartments Furnished" on a paper in the window, made him recollect that his daughter had no "*home*." Sweet word of soothing influence, she had indeed no home—the deserted, heart-broken, and much injured Rachel. She could never again appear in respectable society. She had sacrificed her peace of mind, her heretofore unsullied conscience—she had offended her God, brought grief and shame on her loved father, and now she shrank with the bitterest feelings of remorse from his words of encouragement and kindness: they were daggers to her heart, and it was a positive relief to her, when her father, having paid for a week's lodging, and redeemed some necessary articles of clothing from that refuge of the desperate—the pawn-

broker—had in reality bid her farewell for the present, and was on his road back to Portsmouth. To consult with his wife, to acknowledge with her that it was not possible to bring his daughter to his house again, to have recourse to the good priest for advice, and then to find his way to Hammersmith, were the next steps this afflicted father took.

Such was the substance of Captain Ambrose's communication to the Superioress. Let us now return to the trio we left in that quiet spot, the parlour of the Convent.

"You will not wonder, dear lady," pursued Captain Ambrose, addressing the Superioress, "that I was willing to envelope my daughter's history and my own in mystery, having four other young children, three of them little girls, who will perhaps suffer when they are introduced into society, from the history of their elder sister." "I do not wonder, sir, and I should have made no difficulty in receiving your daughter. You could have placed her here without telling me in what relationship she stood to you. Your own name and address is all that was absolutely necessary, for I have no desire to hear private histories. I shall, however, respect your confi-

dence, and I feel very much your sad affliction. Nothing can be more grievous to a father. We shall pray that you may make a good use of this humiliation, and receive the chastisement with submission, thus drawing good from this great evil of your child's sin."

A knock at the parlour-door had been given some moments before the Reverend Mother had finished speaking, and Captain Ambrose, curious about all that concerned a Convent, could not help remarking that the person on the other side the door did not open it until the Superioress had spoken in a clear tone, the words "*au nom de Dieu*," which she did not until she had quite finished what she had to say. The portress entered, and in a low tone said "the new postulant is arrived." "Very well," said the Superioress. "Does she come alone?" "No; there is a lady in the carriage with her, who is crying." "Open the great gates, and let the carriage drive up to the steps. Show them into the Salle. Beg our sisters to retire to their cells, and say to Miss Neville and Lady Georgiana, if it is her mamma, that I will wait upon them in a few minutes." Captain Ambrose could not

but admire the quiet manner in which everything was done in this abode of order.

"What pension shall I have to pay to your banker for my child's residence under your care?"

"The entrance fee for these poor young people is two guineas, but if you like to subscribe something towards our charity I shall feel very grateful."

Captain Ambrose arranged that he should bring his daughter, if she were willing, the day following, and then said, as he took his hat in his hand to go, "I suppose I could not see the establishment?" "I should with pleasure show you the Asylum if *Mrs.* Ambrose were with you, Perhaps she may be in London in the summer." She was coming in the spring, and they would pay a visit together.

A few more words of civility and the Captain returned to London; the Superioress and her Assistante went to receive the aspirant to the religious life. What a change of conversation! From the sympathy of her compassion for an erring child of Adam and a grieved parent, to receive into the Convent a child of hope and innocence. Our Reverend Mother with a cheerful and composed smile kissed on both cheeks

the young and peculiarly innocent looking girl who with her weeping mother were waiting in the Community Salle. "Welcome, my dear young lady! Welcome to the Convent of the Good Shepherd. Pray be seated, madam, and forgive me if in the pleasure I have to see your dear young lady, I do not appear sufficiently to feel the noble sacrifice you make of your child." Lady Georgiana Neville endeavoured to compose herself as she said, "*I dare not*, Reverend Mother, refuse to God the treasure I have enjoyed these nineteen years, when He demands it from me. Jemima has been a most affectionate and dutiful child; she has never given me one moment's trouble or anxiety, till her determined resolution to enter the religious life. For two years she has been so fixed in this, that all her former docility, and all the love I thought she bore me, have not been sufficient to deter her. I can resist no longer, fearing to sin by opposing the holy will of God, but if she would but have chosen any other order—I beg you a thousand pardons, dear Reverend Mother, but you must excuse me—it does to me seem so shocking that Jemima, who has lived in such extreme innocence, scarcely knowing what a penitent meant,

should choose to shut herself up with this wretched class of beings," and the sorrowful Lady Georgiana gave way to a torrent of tears. "Dear mamma," said the gentle daughter, "Our Blessed Lord did not despise Magdalen when she knelt at His feet, and our Blessed Lady, how pure she was! yet she associated with St. Magdalen after her conversion; and oh! dearest mamma, would you not like me to be employed in the very occupation of our dear Redeemer—who came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance! I love you dearly, my own mamma, but the words are quite clear and distinct—'he who loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' You wish me to be happy—you know I was never so in the world." Lady Georgiana raised her sweet child from her kneeling position, and turned to the Superior-ess, who was watching with much interest the struggles of the maternal feeling with the sense of duty. "Yes, dear Reverend Mother, it is very true—her poor father and myself have long seen it—it is most strange and unaccountable—we have taken her into all the London gaiety, and she has never objected, never opposed us in any one thing, except the longing for the

Convent. I have seen her dance with such a look of abstraction, and afterwards, when I have asked her what she was thinking of—it was either Magdalen in the rich Pharisee's house, or the nuns of such and such a Convent saying their office; or the Blessed Virgin in her meditation when the angel Gabriel saluted her with the Hail Mary: or something pious and beautiful, but she never appeared to see her partner, or the gaiety about her, living quite a solitary life in the midst of the turmoil of a London season." The Reverend Mother smiled, and said cheerfully, "Oh! dear lady, you will soon be reconciled to this, when you see your daughter happy; and I am convinced your religious mind will, in the end, feel as I do, that it is a great honour to be the mother of one chosen to serve the King of Kings. After all, how short is life; and when the awful hour of your death approaches, will you not rejoice that you have not opposed this dear young lady's so evident call to religion? The sacrifice you have made will be a great consolation to you then." "I am afraid you will think me very rude, but I think if she had chosen an ordinary path in religion—but I have such a horror of the unfortunates she must mix with,

and yet, dear Reverend Mother, you give me a better impression of the order." "I am sure Lady Georgiana, if you knew something more of us and our duties, this *horror* would vanish," said the Reverend Mother. "I have already explained to you, that the nuns who are chosen from the community to govern the Asylum, are the only ones who are permitted to have any communication with the penitents, and you might pass months in the Convent without knowing that we have sixty repentant souls so near. I wish you would do me the favour to walk over the establishment. Lady Georgiana consented to this, and with her daughter followed the Reverend Mother. The Assistante accompanied them, conversing with Miss Neville in French, the only language she could speak, being just arrived from her own country in England. "We pass through this door, said the Reverend Mother, from the Convent to the Asylum, and your daughter will never pass this step, except obedience sends her. The religious life is so unlike the most pious life in the world, that I can give you little idea of her duties, but you will judge from her appearance in a few months whether she is well, and likes the life she is

so happy as to choose. She will be in the noviciate and away from all that can distract her mind, whilst the religious life is formed in her, and you may depend on what I assure you, that she will not ever mix with the penitents. There are many nuns in our order, who have a great desire for the salvation of souls, but not the qualities necessary for guiding our poor penitents, they have the full merit of the holy work, as much as if they were with the penitents all day, though they may, perhaps, from morning till night never see even one. Your daughter may prove one of these, and may be united to the community of their good works by belonging to it, as even any one in the world who subscribes to the charity has, to a certain extent, a part in its merit. If we depended on what *we do*, there would be no conversions ; we must pray the Almighty to accomplish His own work, and the prayers of an innocent pure soul, such as your daughter's, we hope may be carried to the throne of the Most High." "Are the penitents *really* ever converted?" asked Lady Georgiana. "There is not the least doubt of it : but here we are in the Asylum," said the Reverend Mother ; "this is their play-ground, separated,

as you see, from our garden by this close wooden paling; that is the wash-house: but we will go first to the class-room." Lady Georgiana was introduced to the first mistress of the penitents, a young and intelligent looking nun, who with a particularly happy countenance welcomed the lady and her daughter. "The children," as the penitents are always called, were chiefly in the laundry, but those who were present rose and made way for Lady Georgiana with much respect. Her ladyship's kind heart smote her when she saw the modest looks of what she had so lately called "this wretched class of beings." Being seated on the elevated seat at the end of the large room, the children resumed their seats and continued their work without appearing to have the least curiosity. Being desired to sing, one of them with a sweet voice intoned the little hymn called "Magdalen's verses." Jemima shed tears, and even Lady Georgiana was affected. They visited in turn the dormitory, refectory, laundry, wash-house, and packing room, and every moment removed a little and a little more of Lady Georgiana's prejudice against this particular order. On returning to the Community,

she expressed herself much relieved by what she had seen. "I perceived there were nuns presiding in each department; is it always so?" "Yes; there are three for the laundry, a nun in the wash-house, who is chosen from amongst the lay sisters, as the damp and steam require a strong constitution to be there four days in the week; there is also the mistress of the laundry, and the mistress of the needle-work, beside the head mistress of all, whose charge is very important; these three are always choir nuns, and we have also a lay sister in the mangling room, beside the lay sister who serves the children's refectory." "How very quiet they are; are they always so?" "It was the time of silence, which they keep admirably; but in the hours appointed for recreation they make a great noise, I assure you, dear lady, and we like to see them cheerful and happy, whilst they are not offending God, but trying by hard labour to atone for past idleness." "You seem to have a great deal of employment." "We have indeed been very happy in that respect, for on the produce of the laundry depends the number of penitents we are able to receive into the house, on that and our

annual subscribers, for, as you know, Lady Georgiana, we have no settled funds for their support."

"I was amused," said Lady Georgiana, "when in the packing-room, to see some of my own pocket-handkerchiefs, which that young girl handed me to see the beauty of the ironing. Was that a penitent?" "Yes; all those in caps are, or are sometimes here for preservation. In larger Asylums abroad, we have a division separated from the penitents entirely, which division is called 'a class for preservation.' There are numbers of young girls who are in dangerous situations, or have fallen into bad company, who may, by a timely residence here, be rescued from further mischief. It is my most earnest desire to establish a class of preservation in England, and if Almighty God will inspire some charitable soul with the thought to purchase heaven by the sacrifice of a part of their income, we may yet see so great a blessing near this great wicked city." "It is much to be desired," replied Lady Georgiana; "but tell me, dear Reverend Mother, that penitent in the packing-room, after showing off her cases of linen, and drawing my attention

to the colour and shine of some fine table-cloths, said, amongst other things, that she and one of the *mothers* would sit up all night to pack the linen ready to send to town the next day. Did she mean that a nun would sit up all *to-night* with her to pack the clothes ready for their being sent to London to-morrow?" "Exactly so," said the Reverend Mother. "Will that be one of my daughter's duties?" said the frightened mother, with a look of alarm. The Reverend Mother replied, "I don't know what *obedience* may do, but Miss Neville does not look of a frame to bear such hard work, and she has to learn to be a good religious before she can expect to have any important charge. However, if it *should* happen, perhaps it will not fatigue her more than the dancing all night has ere this: what do you say, my dear?" "Oh, don't ask me before mamma; *I* am ready for anything, and you must teach me to be useful." "Well," said the pious Mother with a sigh, "the Princess Louise cleaned saucepans in a pink satin gown, and Jemima may come to packing linen in baskets yet. And now," said the Superioress, "will you see our chapel, dormitory,

and refectory—and above all things, our little noviciate.” “Dormitory and refectory!” said Lady Georgiana. “Do you not sleep and eat with the penitents?” “No; our rule forbids it. But come this way, I am sure you will like to see the room where your dear daughter will spend many, I hope, happy and profitable hours.” The Reverend Mother led the way to the noviciate, where an introduction to the mistress of the novices took place, which was a great comfort to Lady Georgiana, as she found this nun a very *lady-like* as well as sweet-tempered and thoughtful looking religious. Accustomed to the high-bred and fastidious notions of the present luxurious age, her ladyship shrank with painful sensitiveness from contact with less refined and elegant persons than herself, so that of all the mortifying, and afflicting circumstances that could have been chosen to grieve her, nothing could surpass the keen blow that her daughter’s “peculiar and most unaccountable vocation” was to her—and in fact, to *all* the young lady’s relations.

Lady Georgiana’s drive back to London was, however, much more tranquil and happy than her drive to Hammersmith had been. She felt

that she had not left her child amongst quite barbarians; that she had had many groundless prejudices against the order; that Jemima might never mix amongst the penitents; and that those of the nuns who did, were after all most recollected and modest-looking nuns, and in much bewilderment, she half murmured, "Well, well, dear child! we shall see if she can be happy there; and God knows I wish her to be His servant—and I was glad to see a piano-forte in the noviciate—and that dear Reverend Mother, she is so kind and feeling I hope they won't expect dear Jemima to wear those thick shoes—and, dear me, how hot that great habit must be!" Her Ladyship put down both windows of her carriage, the very thought of Jemima's heat giving her a feeling of suffocation. "Well, I must try and reconcile her brothers to this step, but how shall I break it to them? Perhaps she may change her mind before the two years' noviciate—that's always a comfort;" and thus reasoning with herself, Lady Georgiana arrived in Cavendish-square much more composed than Mr. Neville could have expected, or indeed any one who had seen the last agitating scene of her parting with her daughter.

That daughter, after going with her new mother to present herself formally to God, in the little chapel, placing herself particularly under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, had had a long and tender discourse in private with Mother Superioress in her own room. Was there in Hammersmith, or all London, so happy a creature as was the elegant Jemima Neville when she laid her head on the little pillow of her hard bed that night, in the Convent of the Good Shepherd?

END OF CHAPTER THE FIRST.





CHAPTER THE SECOND



The Asylum.

"There is joy before the angels in Heaven over one sinner doing penance, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need not repentance."

"Ave Maria, most humble I hail thee,
Queen of the angels, look down upon me,
And oh ! when temptation to sin shall assail me,
Refuge of sinners I fly unto thee.

THE next day, Saturday, Captain Ambrose introduced his' daughter. She was kindly received by the Reverend Mother in the same small parlour, and her name and the day of her entrance being written in a book kept for that purpose, the father took his leave, with a lightened heart, and Rachel was left in her new abode. "Come this way, my child," said the Superioress, and Rachel followed to the Community Salle

There were eight or ten nuns present, it being the mid-day recreation, and they all rose as the Superioress entered.

The Salle was simply a large room, where those nuns whose duties in the other house with the penitents permitted it, assembled at stated times to work and converse, as a relief to the silence of the greater part of the day, and a very merry group they were. A few tables and chairs, and other neat but poor furniture, was all the room contained. There was no carpet. And the only costly ornaments the room could boast were a fine oil painting and a beautiful crucifix in ivory over the chimney piece, The talking and laughing stopped for a moment, and Rachel felt so abashed in their presence that she did not dare to raise her eyes, or she would have seen that no one stared at her; they all continued their needle-work. One of the nuns gave her a chair near the Superioress, who beckoned her to come towards her. "Sister Mary St. Gervais, this is a new child for you; will you dress her and bring her to me after obedience to my room?" "Oui, ma mère," was the prompt reply. Rachel ventured a hurried glance all round—how happy they all look! "And oh! how innocent they are," said

the poor conscience-stricken girl to herself; "and oh! Rachel! Rachel! *you* were once as guiltless, to what have you fallen!" The tears rushed into her eyes, and the nun nearest to her, making some kind remark on the weather to put her at her ease, she could restrain them no longer. No one oppressed her by noticing this, and the Superioress, who had been speaking with the assistants in an under tone, now turned to her and said, "My dear, your name will be Jemima while you are in the Asylum, and you will not tell your family name to any one. No tears either," added the Superioress gaily and kindly, "nobody ever cries in this house; you must thank God with a cheerful heart for bringing you here, and we will all pray for you. Now, go with Mother St. Gervais, and we shall have some talk by-and-bye." "Comme, my schile, me dress you," said the merry looking little French nun, and they went off together.

Shall we take our readers for a few minutes into the nun's recreation? "Well, my dear mother," said one of the youngest sisters, laughing, "how proud Sister St. Gervais is when you send her to dress a new child. She carries her off as a sort of prize, and comes back quite glo-

rious with her when she is once fairly equipped in the cap and apron." "She is indeed a holy soul, and you, sister, will do well to imitate her zeal for the salvation of souls." "Shall I imitate her *English too*, dearest mother?" "Ah, you are a naughty child, we must pray for your conversion." "Thank you, ma mère, and, en attendant, may I tell Sister Postulant how Sister St. Gervais speaks English." "As you please," said the indulgent Superioress, happy to see her spiritual children amuse themselves innocently. There was much laughter during the above conversation, and then the young lady who arrived the day before was called upon to listen to Sister St. Gervais's first attempts at English. Amidst much gentle "espièglerie," various anecdotes followed of the French nuns then present, and how one made this blunder, and another that. They all stoutly defended themselves in *very* broken English, which greatly increased the merriment. When comparative silence was once more restored, the Reverend Mother informed the new Postulant that she had given her "nom de baptême" to the Penitent, who was just entered. "She will be called *Jemima*, my dear child, and you must daily pray for her conver-

sion." Out of respect to family connexions, the real name of the penitent is never permitted to transpire whilst in the house ;—we usually give them a saint's name to distinguish them whilst under our care." The new Jemima was being changed entirely in her appearance during this time. The pretty drawn black satin bonnet, with its crape flowers—her dress of the same material, elegantly made and trimmed also with crape in mourning for the poor infant she had just buried, were laid aside. A coarse loose robe of blue serge was given her, with many kind words of encouragement from Sister St. Gervais, who assured her it was much prettier than all that vanity—her beautiful auburn hair was hidden by a little cotton cap, drawn with strings tight to the head, and the Asylum cap graced the head that once had been so much admired in all the splendour of youth and health. " You look so modest, now, my schile. Blessed Virgin wore cap like that—quite beauful! You very happy now." Jemima's tears coursed each other down her pale face without ceasing. She said nothing, but she felt so very miserable. As she descended the stairs of the Asylum to return to the Convent, a young person dressed like herself

pushed past her very rudely, and she distinctly heard her call out at the bottom of the stairs, "A new child! a new child! come and see," and half-a-dozen curious faces appeared at the door of a large room, from whence, however, was also heard the voice of the presiding nun, as she clapped her hands and ordered them to return to their work. This was grievous to Jemima, as we must now call her. She felt her heart swell with indignation. "Am I to be stared at," said she to herself, "and spoken of by such coarse girls as these? I never can stop here. My poor father did not know much about the establishment, or he never would have brought me here. I am convinced, by the noise I heard in that room, and the manner of two or three who ran to the door, that they are quite low young persons." But her good angel checked these proud thoughts as she approached the other division of the house, which was devoted to the Community, and as she recollected that the nuns did not disdain these "low young persons." "And what am I!" sighed poor Jemima. "They will look upon me as one of themselves, and so I am, and far more guilty, for I was well instructed in my religion, had a comfortable home, and a kind father,

whose grey hairs I may yet bring with sorrow to the grave." Bitter were the tears which succeeded this reflection, and when they arrived at the door of the Superioress' room she felt again humbled and willing to submit to whatever was expected of her. The Convent bell had rung at one o'clock, whilst her toilet was finishing by a checked apron being added to the other novelties in which Sister St. Gervais had dressed her. A blue and white checked cotton apron! This on the elegant girl who, if ever she had worn an apron, had been accustomed to its being of silk or satin, with lace and ribbons to ornament it! Poor body, how art thou fallen from thy high estate of vanity and luxury! And alas! poor soul, how pitiable is *thy* state. Blackened by sin, neglected in thy utmost need, no sacraments for two long years, many, very many, mortal sins committed and not repented of—not once hast thou approached the holy tribunal of penance, knowing that the only condition on which the priest could give thee absolution, would be the entire renunciation of thy sinful life, thy God forgotten, thy duties despised, to worship an idol, who has been thy bane, and thy perdition. Mad infatuation!

At obedience at one o'clock the Reverend Mother recommended the care-worn anxious looking penitent to the prayers of the community, and when they paid the accustomed visit to the Blessed Sacrament, afterwards, many a fervent prayer was offered for the conversion of this poor wandering sheep, whom the Good Shepherd had sought, and was now tenderly drawing back to the fold. Sister St. Gervais too, when she heard the bell, ceased her innocent chatter over every article of dress she was displaying to the disgusted eyes of poor Jemima, made the sign of the cross on her own lips, and was silent. Her heart, however, continued to speak in fervent aspiration to Almighty God for the "schile." Not a sound was heard from the late noisy community room as they passed, and the house was still. The nuns moved noiselessly about, and intent upon their different duties, passed Jemima with her conductress, with downcast eyes and looks of interior recollection which shed, she did not know how, a sort of calm over her troubled mind. "Au nom de Dieu," said the Superioress from within in answer to St. Gervais's knock at her door, and Jemima found herself alone with the Superioress. The simple furniture of this

room was in accordance with the occupant's mind, everything in perfect *order*—nothing superfluous, but all in its proper place. On the chimney-piece was a crucifix, a few framed prints were hanging on the walls, the subjects of course religious—a few chairs, a neat small bed with white calico curtains, a table with desk and papers, and a very pretty little altar on one side of the room, which, beside its crucifix and candles, had some very beautiful flowers to ornament it, made by one of the French nuns. “Come, my dear child,” said the Superioress, “but first take some holy water.” Jemima turned to the little vessel at the entrance, and did as she was desired, with a heightened colour, for it was literally the first holy water she had touched since leaving her father's house. “Take that little chair and come and sit by me, that we may have a little conversation.” “Let me kneel at your feet, dear Madam,” said Jemima; “the most proper place in your presence.” The Superioress smiled as she raised her, and herself placed her in the seat she had designated. “We all practise *obedience*, my dear, in the Convent, and on your side of the house too, my child, so let me see if you are disposed to be *guided*.” “Ah, dear madam, that

I am, a poor guilty heart-broken wretch ; I must be helped and directed, for of myself I can do nothing but sin. I do not think I am even sorry for my sins. I am *ashamed* of the disgrace of my position, but I am driven here by cruel circumstances, not by my own free will. If I could be as I was two years ago, I would leave your house this instant," said Jemima with some impetuosity. "How good is God !" replied the Reverend Mother ; "the weak who love the chains the enemy of their salvation has put upon them, He in His mercy *afflicts*." "Do you think me so very 'WEAK' then ?" said Jemima quite hurt. "Do you think yourself strong ?" "I don't know. I am very unhappy ; and I begin to think, madam, that if I had not left my lodgings in Manchester-street, Lord Henry would have returned and paid my bills, and not left me in such distress. I have given up everything for him." And a gush of tenderness choked her utterance. The Superioress waited calmly till the sobbing became less violent, and then quietly said, "When the side of our Divine Redeemer was opened on the cross, and a passage was made by the soldier's lance to His heart, was it to procure for you the enjoyments of this life,

or was it not rather to save ungrateful creatures? Think of Him as looking at you at this moment, and remember the conduct of St. Peter when our Lord turned and looked upon *him*. Are *you* less guilty? Have *you* had no part in those sufferings of the cross? My poor dear child, beg of God to grant you the grace of contrition." Before those words were ended, Jemima was on her knees, her face hid in her hands, sobbing as if her heart would break. The Superioress drew from her side the crucifix, which was a part of her religious habit, and kissed it. She also kissed the reliquary containing a portion of the true cross, and held it to Jemima to kiss too, explaining what it was, and then continued, "Yes! my dear child, you must take up your cross—'the kingdom of God suffereth violence'—you will not refuse the 'Good Shepherd' that poor weary heart which he asks of you. Look at His bleeding wounds! look at His tender eyes which turn to you to ask you to save your soul. Be not cruel to yourself. A few years, and death and judgment *must* come." "Forgive me, madam," sobbed the penitent Jemima. "I am very passionate and bad, but I will do better. Will you pray for me?"

"I will, my child, and you must call me 'Mother,' not 'Madam'—and think of me as such, for a mother I most earnestly wish to be to you. You will give me that ring will you not? We never see rings here. The weeping girl suffered the ring to be drawn from her finger: it was of plain gold, two hearts entwined together for the centre, and a serpent making the part which went round the finger.^b It was a trial for Jemima to part with it, since it was the first time it had ever been from her hand. "And," continued the Superioress, "let me put your mind at rest on one subject. Your father was unwilling to afflict you. He had another letter after the first, which was also without signature. It referred him to a gentleman in town, who would pay a certain pension annually to Miss Ambrose. Here is the card which was enclosed." Jemima read the name—"A. Blacknell, Esq., Solicitor, Bedford-row." It was Lord Henry Greenwood's man of business—for she remembered the name. The truth was evident—she was abandoned and deserted! A faint feeling crept over the poor girl as she said, "Mother, I will think no more

^b Pagan emblem of eternity. The serpent had been to Jemima the image of our first parents' tempter.

of him." "That is a good child; and now, after all this agitation, let us walk in the garden, before you are introduced to the class. Have you dined?" "Oh, I could not eat, thank you." "I shall," said the Superioress, "order some cold meat with your tea at three o'clock." "May I," said Jemima, "ask one last question? Did my father reply to this letter?" "No, my dear." "Good, dear, noble father!" said Jemima, with a burst of the enthusiasm of her character, "I will never grieve you more. I will hide myself here all my life, if necessary, rather than give you a moment's pain." The Reverend Mother led the way, and they walked down the garden to the pretty little chapel of the Blessed Virgin, the quiet burying-ground, and they read together the inscriptions on two crosses, "Clare, penitent of the Good Shepherd, R. I. P.," and a similar inscription on the other cross to the name Perpetua; then they examined the cross erected over a grave on the nuns' side of the cemetery. There they will rest till the last trumpet shall call them to judgment; and Jemima was full of holy thoughts, whilst she contemplated these graves. The Reverend Mother

said the *De Profundis* for the dead, and they returned and entered the penitents' enclosure. Jemima was consigned to the care of the first mistress of the class, Sister Mary of St. Stanislas, and entered the large room from which the offending eyes had peeped with so much curiosity. Jemima was, however, *subdued* since that moment, by the tears she had shed, and the graves she had visited. The spiritual lecture was being read in a loud distinct voice by one of the penitents, who wore a different dress from that in which Jemima was habited, and from what the most part of the young people wore. Many eyes were raised, but not a word was spoken, and Jemima bore the silent scrutiny better than the first rude burst of voices which had greeted her, on her descent from the clothing room. Mother St. Stanislas took Jemima kindly by the hand, and placed her between two of the "consecrated" penitents. The lecture continued, and Jemima's attention was drawn to it by the interest of the subject; it was the life of a great penitent, St. Mary of Egypt, and she thought of the austerities of that great saint with deep admiration.—"And I shrink from the least humiliation?" Comparing herself with St. Mary

of Egypt, she felt how selfish was her desire to escape the only remedy for sin, *penance*. There were about forty-five penitents present, it being *Saturday*, and the remaining number, twenty, were engaged cleaning the laundries, wash-house, refectory, chapel, and dormitories. They all wore caps of the same shape and material as the one Jemima had on, and, except six, were dressed precisely as herself. There was the same look of modesty on almost every face that so much struck Lady Georgiana the day before.

But such is the influence of religion and good example, that the most abandoned characters have been known in a few weeks to assume at the Good Shepherd Asylum, a look which their former companions in the world would not have known how to account for. The young girl next to Jemima had been sent to the Asylum from prison—a character which magistrates and turn-keys, police officers, and police courts, were well acquainted with. Though scarcely five-and-twenty years of age, she had been eighty-four times in prison; and, in a state of perplexity what to do with this incorrigible young woman, the magistrates had sent her to the Asylum of the Good Shepherd. She had entered the house

a Protestant, and required peculiar and very careful treatment. Her passions were most violent; her temper irritable to a degree which, when under the influence of exciting liquor in the world, had made her frantic. To fight with the police, to abuse the magistracy, to live her term recklessly in the house of correction, to be dismissed only to recommence the same violent conduct, was the history of her life for some years before she was put under the tender care of the nuns of the Good Shepherd. She had had many difficulties in the commencement, but she had now been four years in the house. Who in looking at her neat and composed exterior, would have guessed her former life? None of her companions knew it, and little did Jemima suspect it. She turned her great black keen eyes once on Jemima, who was considering her rather particularly, and then resumed her work. The room where they were sitting was large, and several holy prints hung on the walls, the principal and most interesting was a gift from the Bishop. It represented a lamb in the wilderness, caught by its wool in some brambles, which pierced and hurt it on every side, and there was the charitable pastor with compas-

sionate look and tender hand, having sought his lost and loved sheep, gently disengaging it from its perilous position. There was something inexpressibly beautiful in the whole allegory. The confiding look of the lamb, with its expression of pain and suffering—its glance upwards at the Good Shepherd was pitiful and pleading, and there was the dear and loving master of this wayward sheep, bending over it, to console and comfort it, whilst one by one His gracious hand removed the thorns which tore the poor victim of its own wilfulness. Jemima could not take her eyes from it: it went straight to her heart, that heart which had passed through so much sorrow, passion, agony, and guilt. “And will He receive *me* too, thought she, will He bind up this wounded and wearied sufferer, will He heal this stricken heart?” A text came to her mind that she had heard long ago, for she had not even entered a chapel since leaving her father’s house,—“Come unto me, all ye who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will refresh ye.” Whilst she was thus ruminating the lecture finished, and there was a dead silence. How quiet they *can* be, thought Jemima, as she watched the busy fingers employed in needle-

work. Presently one of the consecrated penitents stood up and said, "Mother, I recollect from the lecture, that Mary of Egypt lived forty-seven years in the desert, doing penance for her former ill-spent life." "The child from prison next rose, her name was Doria; "Mother, I have learned from the lecture, that when St. Zozi-mus brought a basket of figs, dates, and len-tils for St. Mary of Egypt, when he returned a year after his first meeting with her, she would only take the lentils, and refused to touch the dates and figs, I suppose because she thought them too good for such a sinner as she had been." The third consecrated penitent, Valerie, who now spoke, said, "Mother, I have learned from the lecture, that St. Mary of Egypt, in the days of her sinful life, was trying to enter the Church at Jerusalem, where the holy cross was exposed for the veneration of the faithful, when some secret power held her back; she tried again and again to enter with the crowd, and could never get farther than the first porch, whilst all the people passed her with ease. This happened four times, and then she retired into the outer court to consider what it could mean. She concluded it must be her bad life, and she

melted into tears. Perceiving an image of the Blessed Virgin, it put her in mind to invoke her, and addressing the Queen of Heaven, she implored her who was the image of purity to procure her entrance into the church. St. Mary of Egypt was touched with grace, and she saw how wicked her life had been. She made therefore a vow, that if the Blessed Virgin would obtain by her prayers that she might enter the church to adore the holy cross, she would from that moment renounce her former disorders,—and she then entered without difficulty.” One said, “I have retained from the lecture that St. Mary of Egypt after her conversion, with many tears, crossed the Jordan, in consequence of having seemed to hear a voice which advised her to do this, and having first bought three loaves, she lived on these for some time, and then on the wild roots of the forest.” Another, “that in the lecture she had heard, that for seventeen years St. Mary of Egypt was subject to the most violent temptations, and her clothes being worn out, she suffered much both from heat and cold. She was tempted to return to the world when she thought of the “flesh-pots of Egypt,” and had great conflicts to subdue her passions; she

thought of the wine which she used to drink to excess, and she longed for it, but then she thought of her vow, and begging the Blessed Virgin to pray for her, and she punished her body with fasts, and God gave her grace to overcome these thoughts, and she at times experienced comfort in her mind and was calm." After some twenty or thereabouts had said something from the lecture, some showing more, some less, intelligence, there was a pause, and the silence became less marked; the penitents who had said their sentences, spoke a little in an under tone, and the presiding nun had occasion once to clap her hands for silence. She then looked up, and asked one of the penitents why she had said no sentence. "Mother, I never does," was the candid and smiling reply. "But Bertille, my child, you must begin then; tell me *why* you never have anything to say." "Because," replied Bertille, "I am always thinking of something else." "That's very bad, is it not?" said Mother St. Stanislas. "Not any thing *bad*," responded the volatile Bertille, "but I never can listen to reading out loud." "Now tell us what you were thinking of," said Sister Mary of St. Stanislas cheerfully, "I am quite sure it was

not *bad*, but let us be *edified* by it." Every body looked up laughing, and Jemima amongst the rest was quite amused at the, to her, novel scene. "I was thinking," said Bertille, and she stopped and laughed, and looked at Jemima—"but I *am* so dissipated, mother." "You are indeed, my dear,—but let us hear." "Well, mother, I was thinking that the new child, Jemima, was rather pretty, if she had not such red eyes with crying." There was a general burst of laughter,—all eyes were turned on Jemima, who rose from her chair intending to leave the room, when the consecrated penitent on the other side of her, placed her in her chair again, and said, "Oh! never mind, nobody minds Bertille, she is so rude, but she has a good heart, and does not mean to hurt any one's feelings." A real grave look from Mother St. Stanislas, put the culprit Bertille in mind of former delinquencies, in which she had received severe reproofs. She tried not to look frightened, but she had a vision of tea without sugar before her eyes. With an incorrigible levity she yet had a sense of duty sufficient to keep her from incurring the constant little punishments it was necessary to impose on her. The ring of the

bell made a happy conclusion to the awkwardness of the scene, and all repaired in order to the refectory. Grace being said, the tea and bread were taken in silence, and at the sign given "the children" returned to the class room. "Dieu soit béni!" said Sister Mary of St. Stanislas, from the raised seat at the end of the room, where the nun who has charge of the class is seated. "Thank you, mother," from many voices, and the tongues being loosened by this sentence, which is the sign for beginning to talk, the noise which had so oppressed Jemima recommenced. "Can you work?" said one of the consecrated penitents turning to Jemima. "Yes, but I do not much like it." "Will you stitch a wristband?" "No, I thank you," said Jemima, accustomed to follow her own inclinations in every thing. "Do you work all day long?" "Yes," replied Valerie, "I should be unhappy without work, and you will find the time long too, if you do not employ yourself; besides, how are we to be supported without working for our bread?" "Oh, my father will take care that I do not want," said Jemima, "as long as I remain here." "The nuns do not receive payment for the children; their entrance, two guineas, is all they have,"

said Valérie. "How long have you been here?" asked Jemima of the girl who was speaking to her, and whose name in the house was Valerie. "Four years," was the reply. "Four years! why how old are you?" "Twenty-two, next birth day." "And you have been four whole years in this house without ever going out?" "Yes," said the smiling Valerie, "or ever wishing it." "How very strange! and what do you wear that cross for?" "When we make our perpetual consecration we receive a silver cross, and after that we never return to the world, but live and die in the Asylum: those you may have observed in black dresses, and black handkerchiefs like mine, with the I.H.S. on the corner, are consecrated for one year or more, till they are of age when they can either make their perpetual consecration and live here, as I do, happy and without a care—or return to their friends." "Is it possible you never wish to go out! Are your parents living?" "Yea." "Do they wish you to remain here?" No answer. "Did your father wish you to come here?" "We are not allowed," answered Valerie, "to speak of our former life, when once in the Asylum, so if you please we will talk about something else." There was a pause: Jemima

spoke first. "If you will give me something *easy* to do, I will try and help you in your work." Jemima was charmed with Valerie, and indeed she well might be. Sweet tempered and obedient, the plaything of the house, her youth and innocent look would prevent a stranger suspecting the fact, that she had been long in vice ere the first years of almost childhood had passed. Her whole history was a romance—a romance of real life—but it is not with her we have to do at present. The Convent bell rang for Complin, and this was the signal for the class on Saturday evenings to give the weekly account of their conscience in as far as their rule was concerned. The silence and recollection were really admirable. The whole number were now collected, and came forward in threes at a time to kneel before their "mother," the good and kind Sister Mary of St. Stanislas. The rest sat on their chairs and benches, their work laid aside, their hands crossed in their large sleeves, and not to be seen, and their eyes cast down. The consecrated children began. Aurelie, the eldest of the consecrated, spoke first. "Mother, I have endeavoured to pay attention to the holy presence of God, to promptitude of obedience, to fidelity

to silence. I have said daily the acts of faith, hope, and charity; I have endeavoured to oblige my neighbour; I have humbled myself at the sight of my faults, and I have endeavoured to do all that our holy rule prescribes." Valerie followed in the same manner, saying precisely the same words. The next in turn was Doria, the child from prison. She went through the form as far as "faith, hope, and charity," and stopped—a slight pause—and she resumed, "I have humbled myself at the sight of my faults," &c., and finished like the others. She then added, I have *not* "endeavoured to oblige my neighbour." She kept with her face bent down a little, and did not rise from her knees. "Courage, Doria," said Mother St. Stanislas; "what has been the matter?" "Why, mother, last Tuesday, Aurelie was very much pressed to get those shirts finished for the gentleman going abroad, and she asked me to make button-holes instead of going into the garden to walk." "Well, and you refused." "Yes, mother; I was sorry afterwards, particularly when Aurelie was as kind as ever." "And yet you were ashamed," replied Mother St. Stanislas "to own your fault, was it not so?" Doria smiled; she had a

bad temper to contend with, and knew it herself, but it was wonderful to see her as she was, after the life of misery and violence she had led : especially since her consecration, she had made great efforts to overcome herself. Mother St. Stanislas asked her in a kind tone what she thought she ought to do. "Well, mother, perhaps ask Aurelie's pardon, and work very hard for her all next week." This settled every thing, and the three whose turn it was to speak now followed. The varieties of these "practices," as they were called, amused Jemima not a little. She listened and considered within herself, if it was possible they might ever expect her to do the same. The thought aroused her pride. "I would leave the house first," said she, with some haste in a half-muttered tone, so that Valerie said "hush," thinking she had spoken during the time of strict silence. The ceremony of this self-examination was almost concluded, when in the midst of an obstinate dispute between two children of the wash-house, who had quarrelled about soap and hot water, and whom their mother was in vain endeavouring to reconcile, a hurried step was heard on the stairs, and a young girl entered looking rather pale ; "If you

please, mother, will you allow the children to say the prayers for the agonizing. Mother St. Austin says Laura is dying." "Directly, my dear," said Sister Mary of St. Stanislas. "I shall speak to Gertrude and Hilarie afterwards, they will not go to the refectory with the other children. Aurelie, say the litanies, kneel my dears, and be very good whilst I go to the infirmary." These were the only occasions on which the penitents were ever allowed to remain alone for a few minutes, but they were always very fervent when praying for their sick companions. Mother St. Stanislas turned as she reached the door: she thought it prudent to take Jemima with her, as a new comer was never permitted under any circumstances to be from under the mistress's eye till her dispositions were known. "Are you afraid of a death-bed scene, my dear." "Yes—no," was Jemima's hesitating reply. "Come then with me." On entering the penitents' infirmary, an impressive scene presented itself. A young woman lay in strong convulsions; as they entered the priest who was reading the service for the dying, pronounced the words, "Depart Christian soul," &c. Jemima was awe-struck, but not frightened. She had never seen

any one die except her little baby, whose soul she knew was in heaven, for she had had him baptized, and her pertinacity in insisting on the ceremony being performed by a Catholic priest, was the first difference that had arisen between her and Lord Henry Greenwood, who had a bigotted dislike and fear of Catholic priests. The child had expired with scarcely a struggle, seeming to fall into a sweet sleep; and now, in viewing the strong agony of the sufferer before her, she thought what a different death her precious infant had. She felt a sentiment of gratitude to God, that it was spared from "the evil to come." The room, called the infirmary, was spacious, and the infirmarian was busy about the poor sufferer. There were four or five nuns kneeling in prayer, a blessed taper burned at the head of the dying woman, and the priest concluded the solemn service. The agony continued—became more intense—holy-water was sprinkled and litanies said aloud by the religious, when the priest had given the final benediction and retired. The Superioress, who had passed some time in prayer in the chapel for Jemima, after she had been consigned to the care of the first mistress of the penitents, was now here to

perform fresh acts of charity. She wiped the contracted brow of the poor penitent; and from time to time, as the struggles of the death-bed appeared to subside, she whispered words of consolation, hope, and faith, to the dying. "Think of the sufferings of our blessed Lord;" said she, "resign yourself perfectly to the will of God." "Jesus, Mary, Joseph," as the poor girl appeared less and less able to understand her.

The scene of death had closed, the silent corpse lay the evidence of our first parents' sin and our own fleeting moments—the two quarrelling children had been easily reconciled at such a moment. When all repaired to the refectory, they both knelt down, and in humble terms asked pardon of their mistress, Mother St. Stanislas, for the trouble they had given her, of each other for their want of charity and forbearance, and of their companions for the disedification and bad example they had given. Having then kissed the ground they rose, bowed to their mistress, and were allowed to go to their seats for their supper. A lecture was read aloud during this meal, and not a word was spoken by the sixty young girls there assembled.

That which most struck Jemima during the

"recreation" of the evening of this her trying entrance into the Asylum was, that so soon after the awful scene of death there could be any inclined to talk and laugh—yet so it was—though the major part spoke in whispers, and appeared like herself affected by what they so lately witnessed, there were some of such incorrigible levity, that even the knowledge that their laughter could be heard in the room where the dead body was laid out, could not prevent their unprofitable conversation. Three times during the evening one of the elder girls rose, as their rule enjoins, clapped her hands loudly, and a momentary silence was obtained. "Children, we remind you of the holy presence of God;" and the answer from all present, "My God, I give you my heart," made a slight pause, but Bertille and a few others like herself soon resumed their conversation, and poor Jemima with an aching head and a sad, sorrowful heart, heard with considerable satisfaction the signal for night prayers. She had passed the evening between Valerie and Aurelie, who had been too much impressed with the death of their companion to talk of anything else, and Jemima's eyes being too weak with crying for work, she sat almost silent, after

a few questions which her curiosity prompted her to put. What her companions did say was kind and gentle, and the result of her inquiries about the dead girl in the infirmary interested her a little for the moment, but could not remove the extreme depression of her spirits. The poor girl who was just dead had been six years in the Asylum, during which time she had been almost a constant inmate of the infirmary. She had suffered much, and the hope was piously entertained by all who knew her former life, that she had thus expiated the temporal punishment of her guilt. Jemima listened and sighed. What a change of scene and life for her. Was it possible she could live for years in this house? Was it *necessary* for the expiation of *her* sins? She looked round the room with the deepest *disgust* at everything, and the tears silently coursed each other down her cheeks, as she thought of Lord Henry. Had he really deserted her? How bitter was the thought, but its truth could scarcely be doubted.

Having cried herself to sleep, the wearied body did not prevent the ever active imagination from busying itself with dreams. Jemima thought, then, that she was sitting in

the room in Manchester-street where her poor child died. She gazed on its inanimate features, and, the sweet traces of infant beauty touching the mother's heart, she wept much. She thought of her father, of her once happy home, of her guilty flight, of the intoxication of her first reckless abandonment of herself to a villain, of her remorse, of her dear child's birth, its strong tie upon her strong affections; and she dreamed that she took her two poor hands from her face, which she had covered in her excessive misery, to look at the cold remains of her beloved child, but what a startling sight meets her gaze! The still white features were all alive and brilliant with some supernatural light! The tiny hands were moving, and from the tip of each little finger streams a ray of pure light. The helpless body rises—the eyes are open, turned upwards with a seraph's look—a circle of light brighter than the sun, surrounds the head; on the forehead is a cross too brilliant to look at. Jemima shades her eyes with her hand, and, awe-struck, bends her knees. The baby gathers about it a beautiful mantle which its mother had never seen before—it was whiter than the driven snow—

it was not velvet, or satin, or any material Jemima had ever seen, but it was inexpressibly beautiful; round the little waist it was confined with a cincture of stars, and all round the edge of this garment were stars. He turned from side to side in arranging this beautiful dress, and as he turned, the stars shot forth such an intense brightness, that Jemima could scarcely bear to look, yet she was fascinated to the object before her, and though painful to her eye-sight, she could not turn her eyes away. Slowly and majestically the infant rose from his little cot, and in her dream the ravished mother thought he cast one smiling look at her, which cheered and comforted her amazed and troubled mind. With the strange inconsistency and yet reality of dreams, she thought now they were in a vast country, and Jemima was looking up at the receding form of her child, as he mounted towards heaven. From time to time the glittering stars of his most splendid robe caught her eyes, till he seemed to enter a white cloud, so white and so brilliant, that she could scarcely bear to look at it. She looked down, raised her eyes again, shaded them with her hands, and tried to see

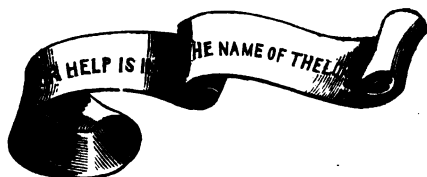
the place where the child had disappeared. She could just distinguish his form as he beckoned her upwards with those radiant little hands. Dear lovely object of her almost veneration, how desolate she felt as in her dream she thought she was obliged by the brilliant light again to cast her eyes down. She tried once more to look up, but the light was brighter than the sun, and she could not bear it, yet she felt disconsolate and dreary at the thought of having seen the last of that lovely sight; and whilst each moment between sleeping and waking, reality was mixing with the efforts of her excited imagination, she thought she heard laughter. "Did they laugh in heaven!" she raised her head once again, and this time opened her eyes. "Why, Jemima!" said the merry voice of Valerie, "are you dreaming? I have been trying to wake you, and you will cover your face, though twice I have taken off your hand, but I don't wonder such a fine spring morning, and the sun right upon your face; but if you had got up for the meditation at half-past five, you would not have had the sun in your eyes—it was so droll to see how you *would* cover your face again, and I could not wake you.

It was enough to make any one laugh—and really, Jemima, I must laugh again—how strange you look! Where are you? Why, where should you be but in the Asylum of the Good Shepherd, where I hope you will pass many years.” Jemima was quite bewildered when she woke from her vivid dream, and actually for some minutes would not believe that she had been dreaming, but the dull reality of her position by degrees forced itself on her, and after a few minutes of confusion in her mind, she sat up in bed with a full consciousness of everything. How tiresome of little Valerie to laugh so! what was there to laugh at! but Valerie, seeing that Jemima looked cross, checked her merriment, and said, “Mother St. Stanislas would not let me wake you this morning when the bell rang—but only think of the sleep you must have been in, not to hear it—and not to hear the children in the dormitory getting up and all passing you; but now the first bell for mass has rung, and you must make haste and dress, and the second bell will ring in a quarter of an hour, and I will come up when it does, to tie on your cap, and show you the way to the chapel. I dare say you

could not put on your own cap, could you?" "To mass!" said Jemima, slowly, "must *I* go to mass!" "Must you! of course. Why, Jemima, it would be a sin for a Catholic not to go to mass on Sunday! Protestants and Catholics all go here. No one can be absent on a Sunday from mass, except for illness."

END OF CHAPTER THE SECOND.





CHAPTER THE THIRD.



Nature and Grace.

"My son, when thou enterest upon the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation."

" ——— 'Behold the man!'
'On Him is laid the iniquity of all!'
————— He dies—
A God!—that guilty man may live!
Let us adore."

Lines suggested by the "Ecce Homo" of Coreggio.



ALERIE returned as she had said and conducted the trembling Jemima to the chapel. As they entered, the priest was repeating with bended head the words "Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa," and they struck upon Jemima's conscience with the force of a reproach from the altar. Poor Jemima! she had

indeed well deserved it; for in the recklessness of her guilt she had neglected the most positive commands of the Church, and feeling deeply the necessity of appearing before God with very different dispositions from those which she had unfortunately given way to, she shrank from offending the sanctuary of all purity, and, since her fall, had never entered a Catholic chapel. Forced, as it were, in the present circumstances to attend divine service, she fell on her knees as far from the altar as she could, and covered her face to hide the burning blush of shame which suffused her very temples. Mass having begun, she was allowed to remain half hidden in the place she had chosen, and, strange to say, though she had shed so many tears the day before, her eyes were quite dry now. She felt oppressed and humbled: there was a something in her heart which she had never felt before; a revolt against every thing that was good: her blushes passed, and she ventured to raise her eyes, but it was to examine every thing about her, and that with no feeling of sorrow or contrition. Opposite to where she knelt there was a painting in oil of St. Mary Magdalen. It hung in the nuns' chapel, which was separated from

the penitents' and at right angles with it, but one altar served for both, the nuns having it in face of them, the penitents having a side view. She fixed her eyes on this picture with a hard look, a sort of stare. No pen can tell what passed in that troubled bosom as she slowly moved her eyes from the priest to the picture, and from St. Magdalen back to the officiating priest. God of Heaven! is that soul given by Thee lost! Is the creature made to Thy image and likeness about to hate Thee! What are these black thoughts which cause a wildness in Jemima's tearless eyes—what devil is tempting her to return to, nay, to plunge yet deeper in her life of sin? God of mercy, touch that heart of stone, nothing is too difficult for Thee! But what unholy thoughts are these which intrude in Thy very presence? Why is Jemima ruminating on the ease with which she could see Lord Henry again,—he was only out of town for a short time, she could send a letter to his club, and he would never in real earnest leave her,—it must have been a mistake, his having so long absented himself from their former lodgings, and she had been too proud in not writing to ask him for some explanation. It was not too late, she would leave the Asylum

that very day,—no one could prevent her, no one would dare to oppose her going,—and her eyes flashed fire. The first bell for the elevation rang, and now every head is bending in solemn adoration. Mother St. Stanislas, the only nun who was in the penitents' chapel, from her raised seat observing that Jemima did not bend with the rest, though far from guessing the reason, rose with quiet step, and coming to the place where the unfortunate girl still knelt, whispered, "the elevation," at the same time pressing her head gently, till Jemima bowed also. Many a fervent prayer for "the children," rose at this moment from the side of the chapel where the religious adored their God present on the altar. The Reverend Mother especially was praying for Jemima,—“By Thy blood shed for her, dear Lord ; by thy sufferings on Calvary, for thy mercies' sake look upon the returning prodigal, touch her with compunction and a love of suffering for thy gracious name's sake ;” adding a moment after, “Great God, I offer Thee, the blood now mystically shed upon the altar for the conversion of this poor wandering sheep, and I will say the ‘Miserere’ daily for the same intention for a month.” Jemima experienced a fresh agitation ;

she was again scarlet; she could not raise her eyes to the picture of the great penitent and great lover of her Saviour, nor could she think any more; a confusion came over her mind—a sick giddiness—the chapel, the children, everything whirled before her, and she fell fainting on the floor. Carried to her bed, she lay some time insensible with two of the penitents attending her with water and burnt feathers. Mother St. Stanislas had seen her carried to her bed, and returned quickly to the chapel. When Jemima opened her eyes with a deep sigh, a few scalding tears relieved the excessive oppression she felt, but not the disgust with herself and every one else which had fast grown upon her. To the kind inquiries of her nurses of “how she felt,” she scarcely replied. A sullen feeling of obstinacy had taken entire possession of her. Surely this poor girl was an object for the angels to pity; and can there be in the world a more worthy call upon charity than a soul in such a state? The nun of the order of the Good Shepherd is here called upon to act,—not by her talents, or her qualities, but by her prayers and patience; and oh, how pure, how holy should those be who are called to this work of mercy!

To a soul in the state here described, the nun's words, mere words, are useless, for poor blind slaves of sin as the penitents are when they first come to the Asylum, by their conduct having made themselves the subjects of Satan, it is a hard and suffering combat they have to fight ere they can return to their Saviour, whose pitying hand has snatched the wandering sheep a "brand from the burning." But the religious can point the way: she can, assisted by the grace of her vocation, and her daily experience, distinguish between the workings of nature and grace, in the lately awakened soul, and forgetting self she will try with the help of God to support, to encourage, to guide, to comfort, the forlorn object of the Saviour's mercy. Neither must the nun spare herself, but recollect that if the labours of a life procured only the salvation of *one* soul, that life will not have been spent in vain. She shall on her death-bed say with confidence, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," and the same shall be the feeling of every faithful soul from the first mistress of the penitents to the cook in the kitchen of the convent, all having part in the great work, which some more, some less, according to their bodily or mental strength,

have a part in. It was then with no feeling of surprise that Mother St. Stanislas, after the children's breakfast, on going to see the "new child," found her tea untouched, and the bread unbroken as it had been brought to her. "My dear, your tea is getting quite cold,—how are you now?" No answer. "It has been a trying day yesterday for you, my child, but cheer up, when you have had your breakfast, I will lend you a pretty story book, and let me see which will have done breakfast first; I am going to the community to get mine, and when I return we will walk in the garden together, shall we?" Jemima closed her eyes. "My child," said Mother St. Stanislas gravely, "you must answer when I speak to you; this is a very unbecoming manner, and I cannot allow it. I am glad there is no one in the dormitory to see you, they would be quite shocked and disedified." "I wish to leave to-day," said Jemima; "I meant no affront to you; I respect the religious habit, but I cannot stop here, so no one will be either *shocked* or *disedified* by my conduct." "You never mean what you say my dear, you are wearied and over excited by the events of yesterday." "Indeed I do though, and am quite

determined to go to-day. I suppose I shall not be kept here *by force*," said the head-strong girl, half-rising in her bed. "Certainly not, my dear, if reason and a sense of religion will not bind our poor children to their best friends, we have no other means of influencing them, but I cannot send you out without speaking to the Superioress, so to please me, drink your tea, and whilst you breakfast I will ask our mother to send Sister Mary of St. Gervais to dress you in your world's clothes." Satisfied with this promise, Jemima smiled, and said, "I beg your pardon for speaking so rudely, but I am so ill and wretched this morning." "I can excuse you, poor child, you have good cause to be wretched;" and Mother St. Stanislas left the room, giving a caution to one of the consecrated to hover about the door and prevent any one going into the dormitory till her return, and if the new child attempted to go out of it, to say that it was Mother St. Stanislas's order that she should remain quiet till she came back.

Having crossed to the other house, and taken her breakfast, the good nun sought the Superioress. "Good morning, ma mère, I hope you are well. Will you give me your blessing?"

Having knelt to receive the "*Benedicat te, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus,*" and answered the Reverend Mother's kind inquiries for her health, she proceeded to give some account of Jemima. "I fear, ma mère, she will not stop, or will do no good if she does. When they become sullen, I always fear their perseverance." "It is indeed a bad sign, but the change of life must be so great, that I do not quite give her up. Have you promised she shall go?" "I have, for I feared to aggravate her dark mood. She is certainly in a very bad disposition this morning. I wish, dear mother, you could spare time to see her a little—perhaps you would make something of her. I told her that I would come and ask your permission to have her dressed, that she might leave." "Very well; there is the office bell; bring her to my room after we come from the chapel." Jemima was satisfied when she was told that the Superioress would see her after office, and she consented to follow Mother St. Stanislas to the penitents' chapel, where they all assembled on Sundays for half an hour in the morning to say their prayers, or read pious books whilst the nuns said their office in their own chapel. Jemima felt no return of the violent and agitated feelings

of the morning—all was settled in her mind. She would write a note to Lord Henry Greenwood and send it by the post, so soon as she got out of the Asylum; and though she made an inclination in entering like the rest, she sat on a little bench with her eyes fixed on the ground, ruminating on her *plans* for the future, as unconscious of, as she was unworthy to be in, the Holy Presence of God. She was rather glad that she was to see the Reverend Mother, whose kind and encouraging words put this wayward child of sin at her ease, and thus Jemima expecting entire sympathy in her *feelings*, followed Mother St. Stanislas with a quick step to the door of the same little abode of order we have already described. “Au nom de Dieu,” and she was again alone with Reverend Mother, but there was something in the gravity of her look as she raised her eyes without speaking, which checked the hilarity of Jemima’s spirits, which were fast rising at the prospect of getting out of this house, where every body was, she thought, too good for her. She advanced a step, but no seat was offered her this time. There was something in the Reverend Mother’s manner which awed her, and she knelt silently, though the colour mounted her face as

she did so. The Superioress broke the silence : “ I hear you wish to leave the Asylum, Jemima, will you give me your reasons ? ” What could Jemima reply ? She did not dare to own her desire to see or hear something of Lord Henry, so powerful is the influence of virtue, she could not shock those pure ears by such an avowal. She hesitated, faltered, and at last said she was not happy, and thought she could never make up her mind to live with such young people as those she had to mix with. “ Poor child ! and do you expect to go to heaven without doing penance ? Where, if you were to die now, do you think you would pass your eternity ? Do you think the poor girl you saw expire yesterday, would change places with you, if you were this night stretched upon your death-bed ? She passed years in the Asylum, though she had lived a life of luxury and pleasure in the world. She, like yourself, wished to leave the Asylum the very first day she spent in it, and yet she never did, for she had courage to bear her cross, and generosity to atone by suffering for a life of sin. And your poor heart-broken, father ! Is it possible you can be so cruel to him, whom you have already so grieved and disgraced ! Where do you wish to go when you leave this

house? You must write to your father to-day, if you are determined, and wait his reply before you can leave. We should ill deserve the confidence parents place in us, did we permit their children to leave our care, without first acquainting them. I am astonished and disappointed in you, poor child, I had hoped better things of you; your father said I might depend on the sincerity of your repentance. *He* thought better of you than you deserve; it will be a heavy blow for him, and I truly sympathize in his affliction. I shall also write to him and tell him." "My poor, poor father!" said Jemima, bursting into tears. The flood-gates were opened; it was a tender chord that the Reverend Mother touched, for though there was much passion in this burst of sorrow, there was also a good feeling respecting that dear father, whom she had so loved and looked up to in her childhood, whom she had so constantly found her kind and indulgent parent, and she knew too that she had disgraced the good name he bore, whose purity and respectability had been unsullied for ages. He was of a younger branch of a noble house, and though poor, the name of Ambrose had never till this time been tarnished. Sob succeeded sob, and

Jemima's violent feelings threatening hysterics, the Reverend Mother gave her a glass of water, and re-assumed her kind manner. "Can you not make me your friend, my dear child? Treat me as your mother, tell me what is in your heart." "You have called me 'poor child' to-day; how can I open my heart to you when you speak so?" "Is that your only reason, my dear? Are you not a 'poor child,' and much to be pitied, whilst you give way to your passions so much? Is it not rather that you are *ashamed* to tell me what is in your heart? But God sees it." "Oh!" exclaimed Jemima, "how dreadful that is; can I not escape God?" and she wrung her hands and looked wildly about her. With what sorrow and compassion did the Reverend Mother look at this poor victim of sin. She prayed mentally that the Holy Ghost would inspire her, what to say and do at this critical moment, then rising from her chair she said, "my child, let us ask the Blessed Virgin to pray for you." "Ah! do, do *you* speak to the Blessed Virgin, I *cannot*, I *dare* not." "Yes, you will say an Ave Maria with me. She has great compassion on sinners, because her blessed Son and Lord came to save them." With many

tears and a broken voice, the Ave Maria was repeated, and then Jemima said: "I feel as if I should lose my senses, but, dear mother, if there was any one to whom I could say all the bad things I have done and wish still to do—" "You must not to me, my dear, make your confession; there is the chaplain of the house, and the sooner you prepare for that sacrament the better, as you will not be at ease or in any peace till you have been to confession; but you can consult me on any temptation you may have,—for instance, if disgusted with the life you see before you here, you thought for a moment that you would return to the slavery of your passions in the world, and that living in vanity and sin would be more agreeable to *nature* than the cross and self-denial, you could tell me so in few words, and it would relieve your mind; and supposing even this morning you might have wished to go out for the express purpose of looking after your former friend, thinking perhaps that there was some doubts of the truth of his desertion," said the Reverend Mother, looking straight at Jemima. "Oh, mother, how well you have divined my thoughts, and yet I said nothing. I was ashamed to say

what was passing in my mind to you, dear mother, who must be so shocked at the sight of such feelings." "Far from being *shocked*, my dear, when the weakness or malignity of sin comes before us, we experience a particular interest in and regard for the sufferer, especially if she struggles, as I hope and am sure you will, against the temptations of her passions and evil habits. If there is joy before God over the repentant sinner, you cannot wonder, my dear, that we too rejoice in the conversion of our adopted children, for such the penitents in the Asylum are to us. But you *must be* courageous. Almighty God desires your salvation, He has looked on your misery, and has chosen you from thousands and thousands to show His mercy to your poor soul. But whilst God does *His* part, He expects you to do *yours*. He will not *force* His graces on you, but He offers them with love and goodness. Mercy is His most noble attribute, and He has declared this to mankind, that we may not fear His dignity, and tremble hopelessly before His magnificence. But you may easily lose the place prepared for you in heaven—you may reject the mercy now offered you, and may die in your sins. God says: 'Ye shall seek

Me, and ye shall not find Me;' awful threat to the obstinate sinner! So, my dear child, you must crush all thoughts of Lord Henry, and busy yourself now with prayer and preparation to return to your duties. You must try and make your Easter communion; and, as it is six weeks yet to the time, I think your confessor will readmit you to the sacraments; it is a dreadful thing to be so long in mortal sin!" "My dear mother, you are so kind, I will speak openly to you—if I have a return of all those shocking thoughts that almost drove me mad this morning, what am I to do? Is it not constantly sinning?" "No, my child, it is not; it is a state of suffering, but not of actual sin, and you may make it an occasion of great merit by bearing it with patience, and offering it to Almighty God in atonement for past faults. Bad thoughts may pass through the most pure minds, but if they only *pass* and are not entertained, encouraged, or dwelt upon, it is not sin. The *sin* would be to *act* upon them, or take pleasure in them; thus, for instance, when the thought of rejoining Lord Henry, crossed your mind this morning—you cannot think that was from God!" "No, mother, I suppose it was from the devil." "Exactly so;

and prepare yourself, my dear, for *many* and *violent* assaults from the enemy, especially during these first few days. He is very mad to see you escaping from his power, and he will do every thing to induce you to return to his service. Had you, when these bad thoughts crossed your mind this morning, turned on your tempter, and said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan! I am determined, whatever it cost me, to love and serve God,' you may *be sure* you would not have experienced the turmoil from which you have suffered. So take a lesson from this day's experience, and, as you have often offended God during the last two years, accept as a penance, the difficulty you have to shake off that tyranny which must now be your abhorrence. And do not be harassing your mind with returning on this morning's sin; make many acts of contrition for that and all you have done to offend our good God, and do not dwell upon it. Try and amuse yourself to-day, talk and laugh and cheer up, and do not let me see red eyes again for a fortnight," said the Superioress, smiling and kindly laying her hand on Jemima's head. "Yes, mother, I *will* try; but it is such hard work," she added, with a deep sigh. "It is, my dear; but the kingdom

of heaven suffereth violence, and you must *fight* the good fight, if you wish to enter it. You understand, Jemima, that what you say to me, is in direction, but to none of the children must you ever speak of your temptations, or former life. Be very particular in this, for the loss of a soul might be the consequence, and I have before now sent out of the Asylum a child who transgressed this rule. To Mother St. Stanislas or myself, you can speak from time to time of your interior conflicts, but not often; you must strive to crush all these artful devices of the devil, and labour to become pure and simple-minded. God bless you, my child, and now return to the class." Mother St. Stanislas who was waiting in a little room near Reverend Mother's cell, re-conducted the weeping Jemima to the other house, but her tears were soft and penitent now. She asked permission to go in the chapel for a little while, and there she remained till dinner time, asking pardon of God and begging St. Mary Magdalen to pray for her. With what different feelings did she now contemplate the picture which faced her, and "Oh! dearest saint," said she, "take pity on a poor wretched sinner. I know not what to ask for from my

God whom I have so grievously offended : pray for me, pray for me." From time to time she raised her head to make some aspiration, and then again the tears coursed rapidly down her poor pale face. Bertille might well say she had red eyes; but none of the children noticed her when she took her place at table in the refectory. She eat very little, and could not listen to the lecture which was read by Doria during the repast. She heard nothing but the knives and forks, which were busily plied in silence, by the strong healthy looking girls, who with excellent appetites, and not very refined feelings were despatching the beef and pudding at an alarming rate. The grace said, Valerie asked her to walk with her and Doria in the Asylum garden during the recreation. "It is such a fine day, the fresh air will do you good," said kind little Valerie, without any allusion to the melancholy appearance of Jemima. "I would rather walk with you only," said Jemima, "I do not care for Doria." "But we must keep our rule," my dear Jemima, "we are never permitted to walk two and two, we must always be three, and Doria is very good; if you knew her you would like her I am sure." The three walked up and down,

and it was pretty to see how Valerie tried, by every gentle little means she could think of, to enliven poor Jemima. She chattered away, much faster than Doria, who only from time to time said a few civil words, but she listened and laughed at all the droll innocent things Valerie was saying. Jemima spite of herself was charmed with the little penitent, and could not help in her own mind comparing her with Doria, who spoke so little, and had such *very* large black eyes. As the gaiety of the conversation flagged, Doria asked Valerie, "Do you know when Olympiade goes to Anger?" "I believe next week, I think she should go on Thursday or Friday after next, or perhaps Mother Superior will keep her till the feast of St. Mary Magdalen." "Oh, Doria, do tell Jemima about Olympiade, she's such a saint and going to be a Magdalen." "A Magdalen! what do you mean?" asked Jemima of Doria, who was going to explain when the bell rung. "We must go into chapel now," said Valerie, "it is half-past one; you missed the catechism this morning, Jemima, and our pastor gave us such a beautiful instruction on the love of God, and you were not there either to hear us sing the immaculate Conception of the

Blessed Virgin, it is *so* pretty, but you will hear it next Sunday; now we are going to say the rosary, the Jesus psalter, and the devotion for Sundays, and Doria will tell you about Olympiade either after the lecture or after Vespers, but here we are," and Valerie made the sign of the cross on her lips, in token of silence as they entered the chapel. The beautiful devotions they now commenced touched Jemima, because her heart was in better order for them. "The Canticle of the three Children" especially struck her. "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord, praise and exalt him above all for ever. O ye angels of the Lord, bless the Lord: O ye heavens bless the Lord," &c., and everything and every body blesses the Lord, thought Jemima except me, alas!

The extreme propriety and modest reverence of sixty poor girls, taken as the most of them were from the depths of vice and misery, was a sight to move the sympathy of any benevolent mind, but it was not this that Jemima was thinking of. Another kind of thought crossed her mind—where was Lord Henry at this moment? she started as if she had seen some frightful object, and recollecting Reverend Mother's advice, she

took up a book, and followed the prayers that were saying from the Jesus psalter. "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, comfort me—and when thou bringest to my mind the sad remembrance of my sins, whereby I have so unkindly offended Thee; comfort me with the assurance of obtaining Thy grace, by the spirit of perfect repentance which may purge away my guilt, and prepare me for Thy kingdom. Have mercy on all sinners, Jesus, I beseech Thee; turn their vices into virtues, and making them true observers of Thy law, and sincere lovers of Thee; bring them to bliss in everlasting glory. Have mercy also on the souls in purgatory, for Thy bitter passion, I beseech Thee, and for Thy glorious name, Jesus. O Blessed Trinity, One God, have mercy on me! Our Father. Hail Mary." The unholy thought left her before this division of the Jesus psalter was finished, and she entered into all the prayers which followed with some degree of devotion. To find that she *could* pray, after so long having lost the habit, encouraged our poor penitent, and, leaving the chapel, she requested Valerie to take her to pray near the dead, as she observed by six at a time the penitents were going and coming to fulfil that pious duty. The sight of the sad remains of

former beauty in the penitent who died the night before, affected Jemima, and it was with a calm feeling of peace, yet rather sad too, that she returned to the chapel for Vespers. A sermon on the Prodigal Son, and Benediction closed the service, and Jemima, for the first time, heard "the children" sing. When the nuns had finished from their chapel, before the priest in solemn chaunt intoned the "*Deus qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili*," the penitents were permitted always to sing from their chapel. On this Sunday, they chose the following hymn :—

"I bless thee, spotless Mary!
Thee blest! no sin e'er stained;
From Adam's fall, blest Mary,
Thy soul no hurt sustained.

Untainted, purest Mary!
How blest, then, is thy lot!
To be conceived thus, Mary,
Without a sinful spot.

I bless thee, pious Mary;
Blest Mary, thee I praise;
To thee, O blessed Mary!
My suppliant hands I raise.

In trials and in sorrows,
To Mary I will fly;
In dangers and death's horrors,
Mary! Mary! I will cry.

Aid me, then, blessed Mary,
For I am sorely pressed ;
Show thyself a Mary !
And be my port of rest.

O pray for me, blest Mary ;
To thee, thy child, I fly ;
Defend me now, blest Mary,
Receive me when I die.

And blest be thou, O Mary,
O Mary, ever blest ;
And blest be *He*, the *Born* of thee,
And nourished at thy breast.

Amen."

It was a thrilling and touching sound, the voices of those poor children raised in honour of the purest of all pure creatures, and they were very fond of hymns to the B. Virgin. Some of the voices were rich and melodious, and it was a great triumph of grace over nature, those beautiful voices which had ere this sung with a very different intention and less holy words, to hear them now invoke the "Virgin of Virgins." Surely she will beg her Son to pardon these wandering sheep who now return to their Shepherd, and desire, with tears of contrition, to regain the innocence they have lost.

The noisy recreation of the evening again disturbed Jemima's peace of mind: she felt so

irritable, so vexed and touchy, if Valerie spoke to her, she scarcely answered; and when Doria, who loved to speak of Olympiade the Magdalen, offered to tell Jemima all she could about her, Jemima said testily, "I should be willing to listen, if I could hear in all this noise; but it is impossible, so you may as well spare your trouble." It was a great thing for Doria to have put herself so forward as to offer to entertain any one, and she drew back at once, greatly offended, and did not again speak to the abrupt Jemima. Valerie made many efforts to draw her from her thinking mood, but it was useless—she complained of head-ache, which was not astonishing, and sat silently brooding over her "*cruel fate*." If one could be always with those good religious, thought she, it would be easy to be contented, but to live months and years with this crowd of rude girls it is impossible—clap, clap, clap. "Children we remind you of the holy presence of God." "My God, I give you my heart." Do *I*, thought Jemima, give my heart to God? Alas! no; and yet I promised Mother Superior I would try and be cheerful and contented—if I had nothing to reproach myself with—if I was as innocent as herself how easy it would be to

be cheerful. But I have been shamefully ill used! "I wish I could tell Lord Henry what I think of his conduct," and with a heightened colour, "Jemima, alas! again entertained dangerous thoughts." If I could but let him know what a contempt I have for him,—if I could but tell him that I will never think of him again—his conduct is abominable. I should just like to go and tell him this and then return here, and live as the rest do, for what have I to care for in the world—life has no longer any charms for me, and I do not wish to be happy—mine is indeed a broken heart, and yet I cannot give it to God." Thus ruminated poor Jemima; her promises to the Superioress forgotten, a bitter feeling of discontent again stealing over her. Sister Mary of St. Stanislas's vigilant eye from time to time rested on her, but she took no notice of the wayward child. She caused silence in the room by the usual unfailing clap of the hand, and the promise to tell them a story produced a profound attention, after the first few exclamations. "A story children, a story." "Mother St. Stanislas is going to tell us a story—can't you be quiet, hush,"—which passed from one to another till all had settled in their places. Sister Mary of St.

Stanislas wishing to draw profit to the children from the recent death, took occasion to recount some true circumstances of a sudden death which had come to her knowledge, and though she carefully disguised the names of the parties, she made it sufficiently clear in its circumstances. She took this opportunity to point out to them the uncertainty of life, the few years some of them had to live, and desired each child to ask herself if God were to send forth his angel of Death that night,—if He had said as to the rich man in the Gospel, “Thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee,”—where should we each appear? She finished her story with a few solemn and impressive words, and some *did* look penetrated, and it had evidently one effect—the recreation was no longer noisy.

And what were Jemima's thoughts? She had scarcely listened. Not having resisted the temptation at the first thought, her mind was again the sport of her imagination, and filled with fresh plans, all turning on the one ruling point—the getting out of this house. I shall ask Mother St. Stanislas if I can speak to the Superioress to-morrow, and she rose for this purpose when the bell for night prayers rang.

and she must kneel down immediately. Not a prayer did Jemima say; she cried with vexation and disappointment, and her tears which fell unceasingly only added to her irritation; they were tears of temper and self-will, and of course brought no relief. After prayers she approached the first mistress, who, however, imposed silence, saying, she would speak to her in the morning, it was not customary to break the silence from the second bell for Matins till after Mass the next day, except on occasions of great necessity. Every thing conspired to overpower the weak resolution of Jemima. She threw herself on her bed and sobbed with passion and discontent. Those who slept in the same dormitory undressed, and some of them were asleep, before this burst had subsided. Jemima pitying herself with the true selfishness of this kind of grief, did not move. No other sound proceeded from the dormitory except from time to time a sob of the exhausted passion, when a fresh thought of all she suffered again aroused the violence of her weeping. The child in the bed next to her rose half up, and said, "I wonder you are not ashamed to make such a noise disturbing all the dormitory, and many of the poor

children have got a hard day's washing before them to-morrow, and want their sleep to-night, and breaking the grand silence too, crying like a big baby; if you don't leave off I'll knock at Mother St. Stanislas's window, and she'll give you a good scolding, and to make me break the silence in this way too, I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself." The very shock to her feelings of this rude address silenced Jemima. She *did* leave off crying, but it was to take the most determined resolution not to stop twenty-four hours in the house. She went to bed, but not to sleep, and when the first mistress came to her a few minutes after she had undressed, Jemima closed her eyes, determined not to complain, as every one would hear her, and she was not a "big baby," unable to hold her tongue till morning. The visit to every bed being made, and the good nun having retired locking the dormitory door, Jemima heard her go into her own cell which had two small windows, one on either side looking into the two dormitories between which the cell was placed. "How happy she always looks," said Jemima to herself with a deep sigh. The next day after Mass, she once more begged Mother St. Stanislas

to let her leave the Asylum ; her pale wan countenance went to the nun's heart as she spoke. "You have not slept, my dear child," she said, kindly. "No, not one half hour, and I would stop here if I could, but I cannot bear the manners of the children, they are so rude." "My dear, you should not mind them—laugh at them—and don't take little things to heart." Jemima recounted the scene of last night with many tears. "Well, my dear, and did you not expose yourself to it? Why were you so foolish as to break the rule in that way? Depend upon it if you do your duty, no one can hurt you. Look at Valerie and Doria, how happy and contented they are, because they do not give any one reason to find fault with them, but you are so lately come, that it is natural you should make little mistakes ; in a short time you will learn better and—" "Oh no, mother, for I am going to-day. I cannot stop in this house, I should lose my senses ; I *must* see the Superioress directly." "*Must* see the Superioress directly ! repeated Sister Mary of St. Stanislas, "that is not the way to ask such a favour, but I will speak to her presently for you." When the first mistress made known to the Supe-

rioreess how things were going on with our poor penitent, and expressed her little hope that she would ever settle down to the rule and manner of the Asylum, the Superioress, who had more *experience* than the young nun who had the important charge of the class, said, "My dear daughter, I am far from thinking hers a hopeless case; if she can get over these struggles and temptations she will prove a good and true penitent, but she will suffer much first, and there will be the trial; if she have courage to *endure* what is before her, all will end well; if she become wilful and obstinate, she must go; in the meantime, it is dangerous to contradict her too much, it will only strengthen her opposition, let her write to her father to-day it will amuse her, she will think she has done something, and I will add a few lines." "I wish, dear mother, you would see her if you have time this morning." "No, certainly not; if she is to be coaxed into being good it will not be a solid conversion; if she acts from human motives, from affection for me, or whatever it may be, you cannot expect that God will bless such a motive; of course, at first, it is not to be

expected that she will have a pure love of God, but she must by degrees be trained to learn *Whom* she has offended, and that the only way for her to be reconciled to that God Whom she has outraged is by suffering the penalty of sin." "Poor child," said the compassionate Mother St. Stanislas, "she has much before her." "But," rejoined the Superioress, "heaven at the end; would it not be a cruel kindness to deceive these poor souls, and make them believe that they can go on giving way to their excess of feeling and passion, and self-will, and then at their death for them to find that they have not fulfilled the end of their creation? But if Jemima remains here, she will get calm; it is the best sign possible all these violent storms now, and you will see the sunshine will come, when the devil is fairly overcome. At present he is using the power she has given him over her by sin, to torment her, and try and force her back into his hateful service. Look at some of the children who have been longest here. Valerie and Olympiade and all the consecrated in fact, can any thing be happier than they are, yet they have all passed through what Jemima suffers, more or

less, so do not lose heart, my dear daughter, and do not be *too* kind and feeling," said the Superioress smiling, "or you will spoil your children for the hard world the most part of them have yet to struggle with." The first mistress laughed and said, she would try and be "more hard-hearted," but that was not her character, for with great firmness, courage, and strength of mind, she possessed the tenderness of a true mother of penitents. "What day have you fixed, *ma mère*, for the burial of Laura?" "I think Thursday. I have a letter from her brother this morning, who desires to be present, but he cannot leave his office till four o'clock, and he begs so earnestly that we will wait for him, that I think, though rather inconvenient, we must do so. He will be here this evening to see the remains of his poor sister. They were much attached in early life, it seems, and all this feeling of affection has returned now that she is dead. In the note I wrote yesterday, I begged him to come at six o'clock, as the penitents are all then at their supper. You will come to the Convent parlour at that hour to conduct him to the penitents' infirmary. Sister St. Austin will

accompany you, and you will return with him before you say the grace in the children's refectory, that his visit may be paid at a time when there is no chance of his meeting any of the penitents."

Jemima wrote to her father, her letter was as follows:

"My dear Father,

"I know what I am going to say will grieve you, but I think it would grieve you much more could you see the manner of life of your poor Rachel, and all she has to suffer from her residence here. I know I have forfeited all right to that place in your heart I was once so happy as to have, but I am still your daughter, and the pains you have taken to place me, in what you thought would be a happy home, where my shame and my sin would be hidden, shows that you wish to be yet a father to me. But, dear father, I do not know if *you* have been deceived, or how it is, but I can scarcely suppose if you had had a true account of the Establishment given you, you would have thought of leaving me amongst such a set of companions. I would do everything, anything *for you*, my dear father—there

is no sort of suffering I would not bear to atone for the trouble I have given you—but not in this house. The nuns are very good, but they have such ideas of doing everything for God, and I am so strange here, and I am afraid they did not tell you all about the rough children who are employed in the wash-house, or I think you would never have exposed me to their impertinence. They did not, perhaps, think it necessary to tell you, or perhaps they don't see the manner in which I am treated. The children, as they are called, are very respectful to the nuns, but they treat me like one of themselves, stare at me, make remarks before my face, and when I colour they laugh at me. Indeed, father, if Mother Superior would have allowed it, I should have gone out to-day, but as she insisted on my writing to you first, I do so, hoping you will answer me *by return of post*, giving your permission for me to leave this place where I am so very miserable. I think, father, if you would permit it, I could with comfort settle myself in the lodgings you took for me, till you could come to town to talk about my future prospects. Will you then lose no time, for I

cannot bear what I go through here. The "washers," as the young people call their companions who do the work in the wash-house, are so bold, and one red-faced girl seems to take a pleasure in insulting me, spoke to me in such a way last night when I cried in bed—oh! dear father, I *cannot, will not*, bear their impertinence. I am sure you will not expect it of me, so I am in hopes you will arrange something for me immediately. Do not fail to write to the Superioress quite firm, to say I am to go out; and with best love and affection,

"Believe me your obedient daughter,

"RACHEL AMBROSE."

The penning this selfish effusion, occupied and interested Jemima, but she was not a little surprised when Mother St. Stanislas, instead of sealing it as she had expected in her presence, took it with her open as it was, to the other house, when she went to the Community Refectory for dinner. "Well, I don't care," said Jemima; "if they read my letter, and see anything they don't like to read, it's their own fault. I am not ashamed of anything I have written;"

yet she turned very red as she said this, half to herself and half to Valerie. Valerie answered that it was not permitted to write or receive letters without their passing through the Superioress' hands. "You might as well have told me that beforehand, at any rate," said Jemima, very cross.

Things remained in this state for three days, for her father did not answer by return of post. Jemima making herself very disagreeable to the children, and they on their part amply returning her looks of contempt and dislike. Idle and restless, she counted the hours till the post came in each day, and then she teased the first mistress to go to the community to see if there was a letter for her. The answer arrived on Thursday morning, when the preparations for Laura's funeral occupied every one who could be spared from the laundry and work-room. "Do, Mother St. Stanislas, go and see if there is not a letter for me—it is so unkind of my father to leave me here, and not to write as I asked him." The nun made no reply to this often repeated fretful question, but going to the community, she did inquire of the Superioress if there was anything for Jemima.

“There is a blow she little expects—will you go for her, and bring her to my room,” and saying this, she put Captain Ambrose’s letter into Sister Mary of St. Stanislas’s hands. It was addressed to the Reverend Mother, and ran as follows :

“Portsmouth Barracks, March 23.

“Dear Reverend Mother,

“My poor child’s letter reached me just as I was debating with myself what I ought to do with the enclosed extract from the ‘Morning Post.’ I leave it to your judicious kindness to make what use you think best of it. If, after this, Rachel persists in leaving your care before her two years are expired, I shall esteem it a favour if *you* will let me hear this sad and distressing news.

“With the most profound respect,

“I have the honour to be,

“Your most obedient servant,

“CHARLES PILKINGTON AMBROSE.”

“Married, on Saturday, at St. George’s Church, Lord Henry Greenwood, second son of the Marquis of Verulam, to Ann, only child and heiress

of George Gascoigne, Esq., of Melville Castle, Bridport, Dorsetshire." The very day that Jemima entered the Asylum !

At five o'clock, the funeral of the penitent took place, and poor Jemima walked in the train of mourners who with more or less feeling attended the corpse to its last resting-place in the little cemetery at the end of the Religious' garden. How different now is her subdued step to the gay start with which she had answered Sister Mary of St. Stanislas's summons to the Superioress' room in the morning, saying " Oh ! how glad I am, dear papa has written. I shall perhaps get away before the funeral." Jemima had, unconsciously to herself, entertained the conviction that her father would be as anxious to remove her since she was not happy, as she was willing to go, and the *manner* of his announcing this news, this terrible blow, cut her to the heart—not one word to her ! The two hours spent in the Superioress' room, were hours which leave the effects of years upon the poor human heart, and Jemima returned to the class with red swollen eyes, and a feeling of desolation which none can understand but those who have passed through such scenes of

withering passion and grief. She felt alone in the wide world, and she allowed herself to be taken about by the kind-hearted little Valerie, whose delicacy of feeling was conspicuous at this moment, without a word of resistance or remark. Valerie went to find the "*red-faced washer*," and begged her not to speak to the "new child," because she is *so* unhappy. "Well, I won't meddle with her, as *you* ask me not Valerie, if she will let me alone, only she is so abominably proud, and it'll do her good to find there's some that's not to be put down by her airs."

After the funeral, there was silence till supper time, and Mother St. Stanislas having been called away to speak to the brother of the penitent they had just laid in her last home, no one noticed Jemima's absence, thinking she was with the first mistress at the community, as she had been so often called away lately to speak to Mother Superior. At seven o'clock, the hour for the change of mistresses, Mother St. Aloysius, the second mistress, said, as she was preparing to go to the community to take her supper, and join the recreation in the *salle* after many hours passed with the penitents, "I suppose you have

sent that poor child to bed." "What, Jemima! no, I have not seen her since the funeral." "I have no idea where she is, then," replied Sister Mary of St. Aloysius, "for she has not been in the class, neither was she at supper." On inquiring from Valerie, she said the last she had seen of her was going into the chapel, this was just before supper. The children's chapel was examined, and a few of the most discreet amongst the children sent from place to place in the Asylum to see if Jemima was anywhere. The laundry, packing-room, refectory, children's confessional, dormitories, were searched in vain. The two nuns stood together rather puzzled where to look next. "Valerie and Doria, go to your garden, but she never could be walking there at this time of the evening," and Mother St. Stanislas followed the children, having begged Sister Mary of St. Aloysius to remain in the class till she had found the missing child. No! Jemima was not there, but where was she? After the cruel disappointment and first grief of her father's letter had somewhat passed, she thought if she *could* pray. It was thy good angel, poor sufferer, who suggested that thought, though it struggled

through the darkness of thy mind without much strength or power. To the chapel then Jemima goes. Thursday was the day of confession for the nuns, so there were two or three waiting in the chapel for their turn, and by advancing very forward, Jemima could just see them. How still they kneel! The community were taking their supper, there was not a sound to be heard. It was the peculiar silence of twilight—the children were singing a hymn at a distance, and their softened voices scarcely penetrated the double closed doors. Jemima knelt before the picture of St. Mary Magdalen. Her mind, stunned and deadened, could frame no words to speak; she felt a sort of misty recollection of the morning's sorrow and surprise. The gentle light of the sanctuary lamp was more perceptible as the day was closing, and even on Jemima its influence was sweet.

"Thrice happy lamp! how blest art thou!
Altho' that bliss thou ne'er wilt know,
A God to dwell before."

We cannot say that Jemima felt thus, but she for a short time did feel something like a soothing influence. The distant hymn spoke to her musical ear; it was very beautiful in that solemn

place, and the air which was touching, was made more so by distance. The hymn ceased, however, and presently the stillness was too much for Jemima's agitated frame. She looked at the nuns; were they *dead*? they were so immoveable. She then suddenly recollected that she was kneeling on the very spot where the corpse had rested in the morning during Mass. She rose instantly, and was about to leave the chapel when a sharp pain in her temples made her stagger against the wall. There was no one in the penitents' chapel but herself, and her first natural movement as she left it, was to go to the open door which led to the penitents' garden to cool her throbbing head, and then she stepped out. She moved on a few steps, the cool air refreshed her; the door into the religious' garden was invitingly open; she passed through it, and quietly walked down to the new made grave. She could never explain what led her to go there, it was an impulse, and Jemima was accustomed to follow her impulses. She felt such a stupid dull weight in her head; though in the midst of it some vivid thoughts crossed her brain. "Where art thou immortal soul?" she spoke aloud as she came to the burying ground. When again

her mind was obscured, and she seated herself, scarcely knowing what she did, on Laura's grave. She turned her head towards the Asylum, and considered the magnificent walnut-tree which grows in the nuns' garden. "For years and years thou hast lived, beautiful tree, and seen many carried to the tomb, and wilt see many more—perhaps me—and yet thou wilt put forth thy green leaves every spring, as if nothing ever changed. My God, dost Thou care for the trees and not for me!" She sunk on the grave, and there she lay when at seven o'clock Sister Mary of St. Stanislas was looking everywhere for her—it was necessary to tell the Superioress. The good nun entered the community salle, where the evening recreation was in full enjoyment; the new postulant looking the picture of happiness, sitting near the Superioress, an honour she was permitted, because she was newly come. "Ma mère, could you speak with me a minute at the door?" said Sister Mary of St. Stanislas, approaching the Reverend Mother, and speaking in a low tone. The Superioress rose and left the room, and every one rose also, the usual mark of respect whenever the Superioress moved from her seat, but the recreation

went on cheerfully so soon as the door closed: they were used to little confidential whispers, when anything was the matter in the other house, but the peace of soul of no one was disturbed thereby; and as those only immediately charged with the penitents were in general aware of the circumstances which sometimes, as in this instance, required an especial communication with the Superioress, so no one troubled themselves to make inquiries on the cause of the Reverend Mother's being sometimes called out by the mistresses of the class. A few words explained Sister Mary of St. Stanislas's trouble, and she accused herself of having perhaps been to blame in neglecting to lock the door which led from the penitents' to the religious' garden. The Reverend Mother spoke to a passing Tourière—"You are not afraid to go down the garden with Sister Mary of St. Stanislas?" "Not I, Mother Superior; I'm afraid of nothing but sin, may the Lord preserve us from all evil!" and the sturdy Irish-woman rose, procured a lantern, and went off with Sister Mary of St. Stanislas. The moon was rising as they approached the burying-ground, and even Mary Bridget the Tourière felt a sort of thrill pass through her, and she made

the sign of the cross, as by the mysterious light of the moon they discovered the form of Jemima in the distance: at first they only saw the white cap and handkerchief; it was certainly *on* the very spot where the deceased penitent had been buried, and though neither of the courageous women stopped a moment, it was startling and shocking in that solitary spot to see a human form, prostrate in its grief and agony. To raise the almost unconscious Jemima, to half support, half carry her into the penitents' infirmary, was the work of a few minutes, and then Mary Bridget returned to the community salle to let the Reverend Mother know what they had done, and the Reverend Mother again left the community recreation to repair to the bedside of the sufferer. "How are you, my poor child?" she said kindly to Jemima. "Pray for me, Mother Superior," was the reply, "for I shall not be long in this world," and these were the last conscious words which Jemima spoke for some hours. The Superioress, accustomed to the violence of such scenes and their passing nature, replied cheerfully, "Oh! yes you will, my dear child, and learn to be wise and good. It was very imprudent to sit on the damp grass—how your teeth chatter, you make mine

ache—" but Jemima could not smile even, so benumbed was she with cold, and so overpowered with the want of rest the night before—her recent agitation,—and the death-blow to all her hopes. She no longer thought of leaving the house, for, unconsciously to herself, this had only been in the hope of rejoining Lord Henry Greenwood, and she sank on the soft pillow with a stupid feeling of desolation. A very hot foot-bath and other remedies restored circulation, but as the trembling of her limbs ceased, her mind began to wander, and before Sister Mary of St. Austin, the charitable infirmarian of the penitents, could apply all the means the Supprioress suggested as likely to do her good, she was muttering to herself the usual incoherencies of a person who is light-headed from fever. "I was right to bring her to the infirmary, was I not, ma mère?" said Sister Mary of St. Stanislas. "I did not wait to send for your permission, but took your intention in the hurry of the moment." "You did quite right, my dear sister for I should not like the children to see her as she is now; but now go and disengage Sister Mary of St. Aloysius, she has not yet had her supper. Sister Mary of St. Austin

the sign of the cross, as by the mysterious light of the moon they discovered the form of *Jemima* in the distance: at first they only saw the white cap and handkerchief; it was certainly on the very spot where the deceased penitent had been buried, and though neither of the courageous women stopped a moment, it was startling and shocking in that solitary spot to see a human form, prostrate in its grief and agony. To raise the almost unconscious *Jemima*, to half support her into the penitents' infirmary, to half carry her into the community hall, to half support her the work of a few minutes, and then *Mary Bridget* returned to the community hall to let the Reverend Mother know what they had done, and the Reverend Mother again left the community recreation room to the bedside of the sufferer. "How you, my poor child!" she said kindly to *Jemima*. "Pray for me, Mother Superior," was the first of the last conscious words which were spoken for some hours. The Superiores turned to the violence of such scenes of passing nature, replied cheerfully, "Oh, my dear child, and learn to be good. It was very imprudent to sit on the grass—how your teeth chatter, you r

ache—"but Jemima could not move so benumbed was she with grief and not powered with the want of feeling for her recent agitation—and she parted from her hopes. She no longer thought of the house, for, unconsciously to herself only been in the hope of returning to Greenwood, and she sank in the soft pillow with a stupid feeling of desolation. A very bath and other remedies restored her as the trembling of her limbs ceased began to warm her, and before Sister Mary Austin, the charitable infirmarian of the tents, could apply all the means the most efficacious suggested as likely to do her good she was muttering to herself the usual incantation of a person who has been hurried from home—"I was right to come out to the mission, was I not, Stanislas?" Sister Mary of the mission, her sister, was in the tent the morning after her arrival. Sister Stanislas had

asked if the doctor might be sent for. "I think it is not necessary to-night, as it is past the hour for the admittance of strangers. I think there is no danger: she will remain like this for an hour or two, and then I think she will sleep quietly. Sister Mary of St. Austin, I give you permission to sit up with her till twelve o'clock, and then go to your cell. If she requires any one to be with her, call up Doria or any one of the consecrated, who is not very busy in the day,—to-morrow you will remain in bed till mass, and make your meditation afterwards. If any one else sits up, send them to bed when you rise. Let me hear how she is the first thing in the morning, and I will send for the doctor if necessary." The Convent bell here prevented all further conversation, and the Superior returned to the community to hold the Obedience.

END OF CHAPTER THE THIRD.





CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

Grace and Peace.

"One thing I have asked of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord. That I may see the delight of the Lord, and be protected by His holy temple."

PERHAPS, if our readers are unacquainted with the Convent terms, they may like to know what an Obedience is. The word explains itself to a certain extent, it being the third vow of a religious; though in *this* order, in addition to the ordinary vows of "poverty, chastity, and obedience," the nuns on the day of their profession make a fourth—"to work for the salvation of souls." Twice in the day, that is, after the mid-day recreation and after the evening recreation, the whole community assemble to receive the orders of the Superioress, or her appointment to new offices, particular charges, &c.;

and, as the nuns' duty is to *obey*, the virtue of obedience is here brought particularly into exercise. Hence the name given to these re-unions of all the sisters is, *the* obedience ; for, except the mistress actually presiding with the penitents (who are never left alone), every religious in the house, if not prevented by sickness or a particular permission, in some urgent case, from the Superioress, is obliged to appear at this time. And an impressive scene it was, too, the nuns' Obedience. At the first sound of the bell, the whole of the recreation rose, put away their work, and took their places round the room in silence : at the first sound of the bell, each nun should make the aspiration, " Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth ;" adding, a moment after, " make me worthy to accomplish Thy holy will." There they all stood with downcast eyes, and their hands modestly crossed under their scapulars, waiting for the return of the Superioress from the penitents' infirmary. As she entered and passed up the room, the heads were silently bowed, but not a word was spoken. There were twelve choir nuns and novices present, and four lay sisters, the fifth being the children's infirmarian.

The first words spoken were by the Superioress, "Sisters have you anything to say?" No one answered, but two nuns walked forward to the head of the room, and bowing profoundly to the Superioress, said, "It is our rank to go to communion to-morrow." "Yes, my dear sisters," implied the permission given by the Superioress, in this her answer, and the two sisters returned to their place. There was a slight pause. Then the Superioress said, "We recommend to your prayers the benefactors. Mr. C. M—— has given ten pounds." The community bowed in silence. One of the elder nuns said, "Ma mère, that is the third of that family we have received contributions from, is it not?" "Yes, and they all seem to give as if we were doing them a favour in accepting; they are brothers, and seem a singularly humble and good family, with so much piety, delicacy, and simplicity. The other two were amongst those who gave during the octave of the Blessed Virgin's feast of the Sacred Heart. It was quite remarkable the fact that we received something every day of that octave. Our great and constant friend, Loyd A—— of S—— closed the octave, with his and his wife's annual subscription of ten pounds each,—they are so

good and generous, and it was during that octave too, that we had that anonymous present from Bristol. I think we have finished the novena for the donor's intention, have we not? His letter was most edifying and interesting. You have placed the great A., Bristol, have you, in the subscription book, Sister Mary of St. Joseph?" "Yes, ma mère." "And have you also placed the other anonymous £5 from Birmingham?" "I have, ma mère." "You keep your book very well, Sister Mary of St. Joseph." Another pause. "Sisters," said the Superioress gravely yet kindly, "which of you was round at the cow-house to-day, with a penitent?" Sister Mary of St. Joseph was on her knees in a moment, kissed the ground, and remained kneeling, as was the rule, whilst receiving a reproof. "My dear sister, I should have thought that, in the second year of your novitiate, you would better understand the spirit of the Institute. Kindness to the penitents, and sympathy, is what we should all have, but you must never make yourself their companion. Unless you can support your own dignity, you will never teach them to look up to you, nor will you ever be useful to them, by condescending to any familiarity. Your aim must be to raise their characters, and you will better do this by

keeping your place, and making them keep theirs. I should not be able to employ you with confidence amongst them, unless I thought you could claim their respect. Rise, sister, and do not be discouraged by this little mistake of yours, done, I am sure with the best intention ;” and the poor novice very red, having again kissed the ground, rose from her kneeling posture. The Superioress then said a few words on the events of the evening in connexion with Jemima, and in an impressive manner recommended to the prayers of the community the poor sorrowful and tempted soul, which God called to His service, and who had so hard a battle with herself to fight, ere she could resolve to obey the summons. She then added, “If it please your charities that we retire in peace, we have nothing to recommend to you, but mutual kindness towards one another and the holy peace of our Lord.” After which all knelt to receive the Superioress’ blessing.

And now the choir nuns go to say Matins, the Tourières to the exterior chapel to say their prayers, and the lay sisters having swept and put the salle in order, repair to the chapel also to say their night prayers. Before, however, they began Matins, Sister Mary of St. Theodose, the

mistress of the novices, remained to say a few words to the Superioress to excuse the novice, who had been found fault with. She explained that she thought it was a want of reflection which had caused her, on meeting a penitent who was just recovered from sickness, to take her to see the little calf of a day old. "True, my dear sister," replied the Superioress, "you are right, yet she must be corrected sometimes ; you know it is forbidden by our rule for any religious to speak to a penitent should she meet one going on a message, as was the case I suppose to-day, and Sister Marie de St. Joseph is quite aware of this. I should not think I was doing right to pass over so grave a fault, and our dear novice must bear a little humiliation now and then like every body. She is not young, and having been so lately converted to the Catholic faith, she has only begun to learn the humility *we* have been trying to acquire all our lives. However she is not wanting in sense, and I think before her high colour has subsided, she will acknowledge that she deserved her rebuke." "I think, *ma mère*," replied the mistress of the novices, "her respect for you will make her get over the humiliation sooner than anything ; she will bear a great deal from you, which she knows is for her

spiritual advancement, and though she has certainly a great deal to contend with in her natural impatience, she has too a good-will to try and please God, and I am sure she will improve from the strong desire which she has for religious perfection."

How solemn and beautiful is the office chaunted, or said, in Latin! How holy the place! how brightly the "happy lamp" burns in the sanctuary! How modest and recollected the nuns! And when the final Benediction is given by the Superioress, and two and two the religious walk up the chapel, make their genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament and retire to their cells—the "peace of God which passeth all understanding," is surely in every heart. By ten o'clock every light is extinguished except the ever burning lamp in the chapel, and this night there is a light in the penitents' infirmary, where Sister Mary of St. Austin now sits in tranquil meditation, and then rises to assist the feverish patient who, with aching head and aching heart turns restlessly from side to side: again the watchful infirmarian prepares a cooling draught, and having administered it, she takes her station near the bed, says her rosary,

or reads a few pages in some pious book. Before the hour of ten, every nun has composed her mind to sleep, the point of meditation for the morning being the last thought to occupy her mind, whilst in London many a gay party is preparing—many a spoiled child of this world is adorning with care, in costly apparel, the beautiful form which is made to the image of God, though spoiled by vanity, and eagerly pursuing the transient joys which are found again and again to bring nothing, satiety, and ennui. The nun rises at five o'clock, the fine lady returns, perhaps at the same hour, full of disgust and disappointment, to her luxurious home: say even that she has *not* been disappointed, but that all her wishes have been gratified—what has she gained for heaven? what has her immortal soul done towards fulfilling the end of her creation? On the other hand, the religious rises from her refreshing sleep with her mind free and clear, a well-spring of joy springing up in her heart, and the morning's meditation already prepared: thus she gives her first thoughts to God, but who shall ever describe the interior life of a nun! Who shall ever undertake this difficult, this impossible task? Never

shall that mysterious veil be drawn aside which hangs between the world and the religious. Books may be written, of deep and learned meaning, but none but God and the soul to whom He sends that precious message, "Hearken my daughter and see, and incline thine ear, forget thy people and thy father's house,"—shall ever understand the heart of a true religious. How different are the lives led so near each other! The contrast is great, so are also the contrasts in that great wicked city of London. Many crimes daily offend God, yet virtues are practised; the rich and great drive in their fine equipages through the streets where vice and misery reign; the swelling heart of the starving poor rises to God sometimes, the noble act of charity also comes before His throne, yet how many wronged and suffering weep unheeded! how many heartless and selfish pass carelessly by the ragged dress, which covers, perhaps, a less guilty heart.—The eye of God is over all!

After Mass, Sister Mary of St. Austin made her report to the Reverend Mother. She had called up Aurelie, the eldest consecrated, to watch Jemima, since she continued quite restless, and talked in the same wandering style all night. "The

doctor must be sent for," replied the Superioress, and she gave orders to that effect to Mary Angela, the Tourière. After the eleven o'clock dinner, the nuns assembled for their mid-day recreation, which lasted till the one o'clock Obedience, and the conversation chiefly turned on the new postulant's "essai." Permission to make it was to be asked by her to-day at Obedience.—"And how long, ma mère," said she, "will this 'essai' last? When shall I have the habit?" "How long, my dear, do you think it will take to brush off the first coat of worldliness you wear? how long will it be before you are able to rise to the morning meditation? and when shall you be able to dress yourself without assistance?" "Ah, now, dear mother, am I so very bad? I will try from to-day to get up so soon as the Angelus sounds—but it is *very* early, is it not? And then, certainly, I did not know what religious life was at all, till I came here. I thought we had lay-sisters to wait upon us, but I like to do every thing for myself." "Ah," said Sister Mary of St. Aloysius with her usual laugh, "if any one could have seen Sister Postulant sweeping her cell to-day, they would be sure that she never had seen a broom before. She drew it up and down behind

her as a child does its horse and cart, so awkward and so droll!" Sister Postulant coloured slightly, but she laughed with the rest, and the Reverend Mother came to her relief. "Never mind their laughing at you; I have known many an unlikely postulant make a good religious, and it is not to be wondered at, having just left so much finery and luxury in the world that you should not have shaken it off in two or three days. It would be a miracle indeed. But all will be well in time. Make your 'essai' my child with a full determination to answer all the demands God makes on you, and He will support and assist you to accomplish His own work in you. One of our most edifying subjects, was a fine lady of the world before she became a nun of the Good Shepherd, and her history was rather remarkable too. She was married to an officer in the army, but to her great grief never had any family. God reserved her in His wise designs to be the mother of many spiritual children. After her husband's death, at the age of thirty, she came straight to the Convent at Angers. In his last illness he said to her, that he felt sure that when he was gone, she would give herself entirely to God, and it was a consolation to him

in his last hours. He was right ; for no sooner was he buried, than she drove to the Convent with her maid, *dog*, and favourite *bird*. You see dear Sister Postulant, others have begun less promisingly than yourself ; and what do you think happened to this lady ? Why the dog died, and I myself had the misfortune to let the tame little bird fly out of the window, and after some months her maid was found to have no vocation to a religious life, so she could not be allowed to remain in the Convent, and this poor lady was thus deprived of her three favourites ; and what do you think she did ? " I suppose, *ma mère*," said the postulant, " she tried to do without them." " Exactly so ; she said it was evident God intended to detach her from everything, and she turned with her whole heart to Him, as you my dear will do ; and you must begin with *little* sacrifices ; you must dispense with warm water to wash your hands in from this very day, will you not ?" There was again a slight blush on the postulant's face, as she said, "*ma mère*, did you find that out ?" " Oh I hear everything, so don't trust to our naughty sisters when they persuade you to have boxes of *bon-bons* in your drawers ; I shall pay

a visit to your cell, and examine everything after Obedience. Can you bear, do you think, my dear, to see all your baked almonds eaten by the community this evening?" "That I can," said the sweet tempered girl rising cheerfully; "shall I fetch them *now*, ma mère?" "Do, my dear," and then there was much praise of the postulant *during her absence*—one admired her simplicity, another her generosity, her good temper, and obliging disposition. "I think she will make a good religious," said the Reverend Mother, "for she is not '*sensitive*;' very few young girls would bear the great change it must be to her, as well as she seems to do." She returned with two really rather formidable looking boxes of sugar-plums, laughing, and saying, "I do like baked almonds very much, but I am not so childish as to wish to eat them all myself." "No!" said Sister Mary of St. Aloysius, "when I came to her assistance with the broom this morning, she offered me all sorts of good things, so, ma mère, as I was so good as not to take them, I suppose you will give me a double share of the present division." This was loudly exclaimed against by the other nuns, and what a deal of laughter was spent over the division of a couple of boxes of bon-bons,

each affecting to be so anxious for her share, which was afterwards for the most part transferred to the children's infirmary, where, when the Superioress gave permission, most of these good almonds found their way. Without this permission not a single thing could be given or sent to the sick penitents, lest it might occasion jealousy and heart-burning amongst them, and the most trifling presents of a little picture or bit of silk for a pincushion is not allowed to be given amongst the children for the same reason without an express permission from the Superioress. The nuns themselves took a few baked almonds out of compliment to the postulant, who enjoyed the scene not the less from its novelty to her. It is hoped our readers will not smile at the small things which cause merriment in a religious community. They have daily and sometimes arduous duties to perform, which though undertaken for God, and done for His sake only, are, notwithstanding, labours. Is it not then, true philosophy to be able to amuse themselves so innocently, to relieve with a cheerful laugh the mind so long occupied during each day with grave and important objects? Whatever it is, if our readers will not look with

a favourable eye upon it, we must bear their censure as well as we can, for we are telling a true story, and must own all that comes in connexion with it. We will candidly confess, then, that the burned almonds were excellent, and the nuns liked the little they took of them very much, and the postulant was quite delighted, and *rather* noisy, till Sister Mary of St. Theodose made her a sign to be silent, with a smiling yet reproving face. "The doctor's bell," said one of the nuns, as the Convent bell tolled two and two strokes, with an interval between. The two sisters whose duty it was to go to the outer gate to receive the doctor and conduct him to each infirmary, rose, took their work, and making the inclination prescribed by the rule to the Superioress, left the room. "Well," said Sister Mary of St. Agnes, one of the younger nuns, "that is not a duty I should like to have, to accompany the doctor; to sit sometimes an hour in one or other of the infirmaries whilst he makes all his inquiries; and then, do what one would, it would be impossible, I should think, to avoid hearing what he says sometimes! Are the two sisters who are obliged to be with the doctor the whole time he is in

the house, allowed to talk to each other, *ma mère?*" "No, my dear, but they may read if they like, and your remark puts me in mind that I am just thinking of changing the sisters; they have had that duty long enough, and I shall appoint you as one to replace them." "Oh! *ma mère*, I did not expect that," said the light hearted nun, "how sorry I am to have spoken; perhaps if I had not this would not have fallen to my share. And I am not to speak to the doctor either, am I, *ma mère?*" "No." "Well, I am very glad, I can resign myself now; for I was afraid, dear mother, I should have to converse the whole time; all I hope is that the children will not often have their teeth pulled out." "I believe that happens every week," said one of the nuns. "Every day say, rather," added another, to carry on the joke. "Oh! *ma mère*, what shall I do?" The Obedience bell sounding at this moment produced quiet, and the new postulant, who had never yet been present at an Obedience, (it being a part of the rule that none except those who have the habit, or the postulants admitted to their "*essai*" should be there,) came forward now with a slight diffidence in her step, bowed to the Superioress, knelt,

kissed the ground, and then, still kneeling, said with a trembling voice, "Ma mère, I most humbly supplicate your charity, and also our sisters', to do me the favour to receive me for my *essai*." "Yes, ma chère sœur, I willingly do so, and we shall pray for you for the grace of perseverance. Enter, then with a generous courage upon your novitiate, and with a firm intention to bear all that may be necessary for your formation to the religious life. It is a sweet and distinguishing grace that God has done you, to bring you into religion, but remember, my dear sister, that when the great Apostle St. Paul was called to the especial service of God, he was told that he was to *suffer* great things for His name's sake Who had chosen him amongst thousands and thousands, as you, my dear daughter, have been chosen from the crowds of this world to dedicate your youth to the service of your Creator. Let your constant feeling be one of gratitude, and show that gratitude by your patience, fervour and perseverance in the service of God, and that God whom you live for will most assuredly in return give you that support and consolation which the world with all its passing vanities 'can

neither give nor take away.' " The Superioress then addressed the community, saying, " Miss Neville begs the favour to be admitted to the spiritual exercises of the community." The community bowed in silence, in sign of approbation, after which the postulant was conducted by the mistress of the novices to her place, the last in the rank of the choir nuns.

The obedience being the time to give the charges to the sisters, whenever there were any changes to make, the Reverend Mother now named Sister Mary of St. Odille the nuns' infirmarian, and Sister Mary of St. Agnes to introduce and accompany the doctor whenever it was necessary he should come to either house. " Sister Mary of St. Joseph, we name you to make the lecture every day in the children's infirmary at two o'clock, and should any of the sick require instruction in their catechism it will be your duty to give it." Obedience being ended, the three sisters who had received charges, before going to visit the Blessed Sacrament, knelt before the Superioress to receive a particular blessing on their new duties. Presently after, the doctor having been re-conducted to the outer parlour, the children's infirmarian came to

make her report to the Superioress. The doctor had found Jemima in no danger; he expected that this illness would be only a few days' indisposition, and though he thought it necessary to bleed her, on account of a good deal of fever she had, he said, there was nothing to alarm any one, and the Superioress promised to pay her a visit, so soon as she had examined a little the contents of Miss Neville's cell. The doctor was quite right in what he said of Jemima. She slept soundly for some hours after her bleeding, and when the Reverend Mother came to see her she was able to speak clearly and consciously. She apologized again and again for the trouble she was giving, and appeared very much touched by the kind and unremitting attention paid the sick. In a few days she was better, and said she was quite recovered, except a little weakness and a pain in her side, which caught her when she drew a deep breath. She was able to walk down to attend Mass on Sunday, though she sat in a chair the whole time, and Oh! with what different feelings from the previous Sunday. Though much fatigued, she asked to be allowed to go to Benediction, and when the children sang the

"Penitent's Return," Jemima shed many tears of soft and soothing influence. The first verse particularly affected her.

"Return, O sinner, to thy suppliant God,
Return at length, at length converted be,
As yet His favours under foot you've trod,
Return to Him, for He beseeches thee."

Ah! thought Jemima, is it possible Almighty God loves us in this way! can it be that He asks me to return to His service! The simple hymn continued, the singers being divided into two bands, singing alternate verses, question and answer as it were, the second verse being a reply to the first.

"Behold, O Lord, Thy wandering sheep so long
Sought for by Thee so faithfully in vain,
Confused, confounded by a love so strong,
Without delay I now return to Thee."

Then the other choir sang,

"My voice recalling thee so often heard,
Where'er thou goest untired I pursue,
I am thy father and thy bounteous Lord,
Ungrateful child, and still thou art untrue."

Poor Jemima, it seemed as if God were speaking to her, and when the voices replied,

"I now repent of every former fall,
'Tis against heaven and Thee, my God, I've sinned,
But now forget my faults forget my falls,
Behold in me a contrite heart you'll find,"

she shed many tears of gentle sorrow. She did not only weep, but tried to make resolutions for the future. Her good dispositions were, however, so recent, and so faint, that a salutary impression made one hour was effaced the next, yet surrounded as she was by everything that could encourage her in sentiments of piety, with good examples before her, and Valerie's kind sympathy in her sickness, it is not to be supposed she could long resist the atmosphere in which she breathed. She told Valerie one day, when that faithful friend got permission to sit with her an hour in the infirmary, that she "thought that really it *was* possible to be quite contented here, and she experienced great calm in her soul." But she sighed deeply when she had made this admission, and Valerie's playful conversation could not elicit another smile from her that day.

The Superioress had desired her not to fatigue her head with thinking, and to try and put away everything till her health was re-established.

Day after day passed, however, and Jemima did not get strong; the pain in her side was sometimes very troublesome, beside that, she was subject to fainting fits. Mr. Barrett the doctor ordered her everything that was strengthening, and one day asked her if there had ever been any of her family *consumptive*. "My mother died of consumption," said Jemima, "but it is not that." "Do you yourself know of any cause for your continued indisposition? I cannot say you are ill, but neither are you what I wish you to be. Your pulse is very low, and that hectic colour comes and goes in a way which shows extreme weakness. Does your patient take her food with appetite?" continued the doctor, turning to the infirmarian. "Not much, doctor, I wish you could persuade her to eat." "Well, well," said the doctor, making a note in his pocket book, "I must send you some medicine and force you to be strong."

Jemima sat silently looking on the ground when the doctor was gone, thinking of her confession. "If it was once over, I am sure I should be better," and again she sat brooding over the effort that ought to be made, and yet, how she dreaded it! "I deserve the shame and

humiliation, yet how I dislike it!" She spoke to the Reverend Mother on the subject the next time she saw her. "Dear child, do not distress yourself, it is nothing to make you so very uneasy. The devil deprives his victims of shame when they commit sin, but is so malicious as to return it, immediately that they think of the first step towards a reconciliation with their offended God, by confession. Do not be conquered however, but so soon as you feel strong enough *commence*; you will find all the difficulty gone when you have made the first beginning." "Is not to-day *your* confession-day, Mother Superior?" "Yes, my dear, but I should advise you to go to your own confessor. You will find him most patient and compassionate. He preaches with force, but that will not cause him to be severe in the confessional." "How you guess my thoughts Mother Superior," said Jemima, smiling, "I *did* think of your confessor, though I did not actually say so. But he is so venerable looking, I should feel as if speaking to a father." "You *are* speaking to your Father in heaven, my dear child, and do not therefore seek to go to any particular clergyman; you must forget the pain and confusion of your confession in your attention to the duty

you have before you, in the holy sacrament of penance. Would you not prefer telling your sins to a human being *now*, who can never speak of it again, whose duty it is to forget it as soon as he has given absolution, and who is the appointed minister of God's mercy; you will thus by his absolution and your satisfaction disarm God's justice; and would not you prefer this to the public confession of the last judgment-day which every sinner, who has not in this life paid the debt of God's offended majesty, has to make without any benefit to his soul? Think of the bright angels and archangels and the assembled world listening, and you obliged to speak all your most secret sins. No, my dear child, get rid of them at once, that purified in the blood of Christ, you may spend the rest of your life in His service. If it were possible for a lost soul to return to earth, and to hear that by confession they could recover grace, and have yet a chance of serving God, would such a soul hesitate to make their peace on such terms?" "True, Mother Superior, and if I were to die as I am now I could not go to heaven, so I will go to confession whenever you like." "That is a good child, it has just rung two o'clock, go into the

chapel to prepare at the half-past bell, and I will send you word when your confessor will be ready to hear you." On entering the chapel, Jemima found it empty, but in the nuns' chapel there were again some religious waiting for their turn for confession. This time Jemima was not frightened by their stillness, for her mind was in better order. She knelt opposite her favourite picture of St. Mary Magdalen. On a little altar of the Blessed Virgin in the nuns' chapel, there were some sweet spring flowers; the scent, how delicate it was! The violets perfumed the whole chapel, and Jemima thought how good God was to give us such beautiful flowers. The window was open, and some thrushes were singing most earnestly in the nuns' garden,—the lovely notes of nature's voice of praise to the Creator. All spoke peace to Jemima's wearied heart, and the formidable confession, the first she had made for two years, lost its terrors ere a dozen words had been spoken. She returned to the confessional in two days, to finish and receive absolution, and two months only after her entry into the Asylum, Jemima was admitted to Holy Communion.

From this time her health improved and she entered into the usual duties of the house

with tolerable alacrity. She had still occasionally some repugnance to part of them ; the constant company of the rough girls who paid no manner of respect to her delicacy of feeling, was a never ending source of grief and vexation, and though the positive feeling against her had subsided when she fell ill, yet she was no favourite. She was *tolerated* by the most part of her companions, but, except Valerie, no one shewed any affection for Jemima, and this was a great affliction to her. She felt a yearning for something to fill her poor heart, which was fretted by a sore feeling of disappointment, yet she went on from day to day, quietly, but not joyously. Her employment was to embroider pocket handkerchiefs, and she sat hour after hour with Valerie to perform this duty. She kept the rule admirably, and did everything she could think would content and please her mistresses, but this again made her unpopular amongst the less well disposed of her companions. They accused her of seeking to be a favourite, and much was said of her, which happily did not reach her ears, and therefore she did not so much suffer from it. At times, too, she felt as if she could not bear the great, hot feeling of something swelling

in her heart, which caused her with a heated and impatient countenance to tell Mother St. Stanislas that "she must go, she would not stop, no, not another day." But a few words of kindness, or a little message from Mother Superior, calmed her, and from time to time, this dear mother would see her, and speak words of encouragement, and then Jemima went on better for a little while, but it was a weary warfare, and could she ever bear it for two long years? Her father had written kindly to her during her illness, and on her recovery she had answered him also with a far better spirit than was manifested in her first letter. Towards the end of May she wrote again to say that if her father and Mrs. Ambrose were coming to town, she wished they would manage to make it so as to be in Hammersmith the 3rd of June, as that was the time fixed for the postulant to receive the holy habit of religion, and perhaps the Superioress would allow them to be present at the ceremony. And as this time approached, what was our postulant thinking of? For three days before the feast she was in retreat, and previous to entering into retreat she had again to ask the prayers of the community for this important step.

At the evening Obedience, she came forward, kissed the ground, and said, "Ma mère, je supplie très humblement votre charité, de permettre à nos sœurs de prier le Seigneur pour moi afin qu'il m'accorde la grace de faire une bonne et sainte solitude." After an appropriate and touching reply from the Superioress, she again kissed the ground. She had become quite used to this humiliating action, which at first revolted her, and she could kiss the ground now without turning very red, and after Obedience, she bade "good-bye" to her kind spiritual mother and sisters, kissed each one with cordial affection, and her silence commenced for three days. On the evening of the third day she again made her appearance at the Obedience: again she knelt before the Superioress, again repeated nearly the same words, only this time instead of asking her sisters to pray that she might make a good and holy retreat, she begged their prayers that she might make a "sainte depouillement" of herself, and on the morning of the fourth day, she was to be clothed. Every day, during her retreat, she was permitted to take her lecture book and ramble down the garden, and sit in the little retired oratory at the end of the burial ground, and with the

cross before her on the little Mount Calvary, with the sweet birds singing, the budding flowers, and the perfumed air, she felt in paradise. It was warm weather, and the flies and bees were out, and there was a hum and a contentment in the very atmosphere which delighted Miss Neville, she scarcely knew why. She laid her book on her knees, as she sat on the step of the little altar of the Blessed Virgin, and a dreamy feeling came over her of peace and tempered joy. She glanced at the crucifix, and the thought that she was to receive the habit of religion on the feast of the finding of the Holy Cross made her feel a momentary reproof from its mute form. But no, it was to purchase such a calm as she felt, that that heart of love was pierced. Had not her Saviour died for her, she never could have felt thus contented, and she would never, no never, do anything to displease Him Who was so good to her. Could the labours of her life be too much to offer to Him? Was there anything too hard or too difficult to perform in return for His love and sufferings for her sake. An intense desire to live for her crucified Redeemer took possession of her heart, and she who had already made her election, felt as if she had it yet to make, and that

her life was beginning afresh. "Yes, dear Lord, I must suffer also, I know, or I shall not be Thy child and servant," and long the innocent girl meditated on what had been done for her on Calvary, and what she in return was bound to do for Him "Who had first loved her." Thoughts of all kinds passed peacefully through her mind without an effort on her part, and in the midst of the great stillness she heard in the distance one of the London cries of something to sell; she could not make out what the loud hoarse voice said, but the sound was not unfamiliar to her. It grated at first a little on her ear, so beautiful and quiet was everything about her. "And that poor man," thought she, "he, too, has an immortal soul; he may save that soul, whilst gaining his daily bread by crying out in the streets. Christ died for him also. I am very glad to be in this happy retreat. How good God is to have brought me here. I might have been born to a life of labour, or have been exposed to many dangers. But I must work too here, as well as that man who is walking about Hammersmith selling his basket-full." Then our postulant began to meditate on the degrees of merit that could be acquired in dif-

ferent positions, whether this man who had such a coarse loud voice, might not have a brighter crown in heaven by doing all his actions with an intention of pleasing God, than *she* would by living a life so very congenial to all her tastes as was the life of the Convent. She was perhaps getting a little beyond her depth, when the Reverend Mother walked down the garden, as she had done for this three days' retreat, to converse with and instruct the aspirant to perfection.

The next day, at the first sound of the Angelus, Miss Neville was up; she was one of the first to be in the chapel for meditation. The usual morning exercises were this day a little deranged for the ceremony of her clothing, and the most disagreeable part to her was the being again dressed in the world's vanities. The dress of white, and her long lace veil, were simple, but elegant, and the poor penitents, whose hearts are yet full of admiration for fine clothes and jewellery, were in great delight, at least such as could get a sight of her from their chapel. She herself thought of nothing, except the happiness of putting all this off for ever. She left the chapel for a few minutes after the Mass, which was said by the Bishop, to take some refreshment.

and the return was very beautiful. The nuns, habited in their cloaks of ceremony, entered, two and two, with long lighted wax tapers in their hands; last of all came the Superioress leading the postulant by the hand to the middle of the choir, where she placed her at the "prie Dieu," prepared for the ceremony. The procession, as it entered, chaunted the "Ave maris stella," and the effect of the whole was very imposing.

The timid girl, who had often hesitated in her mother's drawing-room when speaking to a stranger, now found courage and strength to make her voice well heard. After the sermon and the preliminary prayers and chaunting, when the Bishop addressed her, "My daughter, what do you ask?" the stillness was profound. The exterior chapel was full of seculars, amongst them Captain Ambrose, looking very sorrowful, and his wife. In the choir were the nuns with their long mantles, ranged on either side, with their grave and placid countenances. In the centre, were the postulant, the Superioress on one side of her, the Assistante on the other. The postulant was kneeling on the last step of the altar, and to the Bishop's question, she replied in a clear and firm voice, "My

Lord, I ask of you the habit of this holy house, the grace to be proved in it in the practice of christian virtues, and in the observance of its holy constitutions. This is the only thing that I have asked of our Lord, and which I will not cease to ask—it is to be able to live in the house of the Lord, and of His most Holy Mother, all the days of my life. I have loved the beauty of the house of God, and the place of the habitation of His glory; and I have chosen humiliation, poverty, and mortification in the house of the Lord, rather than to inhabit in the tabernacles of sinners." Poor Captain Ambrose! he thought of his own daughter, who might have been such a child of grace, but he checked the rising sigh, and said, and tried to feel, "Thy will be done, Oh Lord!" He followed the beautiful ceremony; he saw the postulant leave the choir, and return with part of the religious habit on; and as one by one the expressive articles of the nun's attire were placed on the new made novice, he admired the change, as did every one else. Many tears were shed by the ladies present, and yet the novice, Sister Mary of St. Theresa, did not shed one. She turned her radiant face towards the exterior chapel on the occasion

of coming to the Superioress' seat for the kiss of peace, and the ladies could not but behold her singular beauty in the composed and graceful habit she now wore. How touching it was to hear her say, "Priez Dieu pour moi, ma mère;" as she knelt to receive the Superioress' kiss, who also said, "Ma sœur, Dieu vous donne sa paix." The same was pronounced to each sister as, with much ceremony, she was conducted to each stall, and many prayers *were* said for her by the nuns as she passed from one to the other.

The ceremony over (of which we have only given parts), Captain Ambrose asked to see the Superioress, introduced his wife, and to his many inquiries respecting his daughter, received satisfactory replies; yet his heart was very heavy. When, however, Jemima appeared, looking much stronger and better than when he brought her to the Asylum, he was something consoled. Jemima and her parents were left alone for the freedom of conversation, and were even permitted to walk in the religious' garden, and on the whole the father was pleased with his visit, though to invite him to this ceremony was not, perhaps, the most judicious thing his daughter could have done. After she returned to the class, the Cap-

tain and his wife were conducted by two of the religious sent for that purpose by the Superioress over every part of the Asylum. Jemima, in the mean time, was permitted to remain in the religious' garden, that she might recover her composure. She sat in the little oratory at the end of it, quietly reading a book the Superioress had given her a few days before, and did not return to the class till one of the religious came for her who had conducted her parents to the outer gate.

Valerie asked Jemima if she did not think the new novice happy to-day, making her beginning of a religious life? "She looked very *beautiful*, I thought, but now, Valerie, do you really think she is happy? do you really believe she would stop here if she could get away?" "Indeed, I do; why *I* am always going to stop here," said Valerie, quickly. The consecrated have a great idea of the "vocation to be consecrated," and talk among themselves as if it was a matter of real importance, and so it is! Surely there is something which claims our respect in these poor victims of the world's wickedness, renouncing the life of excitement they have led, to embrace one of quiet and mortification. How many steps they have to retrace! How much to

combat! The religious vocation grows out of virtue, but to renounce the world as a penitent does, who becomes consecrated, is an extraordinary grace from God, *which* alone can do it. As our readers may not have a clear knowledge of what "consecration" in this order means, we will here mention that as a penitent can never be a nun, a provision has been made by the charity of the founders of the order of the "Good Shepherd" for such as, disgusted with the world and its false pleasures, desire to pass the rest of their lives in a pious retirement. None of the penitents can go out at pleasure and return during the term of their residence in the Asylum; nor can they receive visits indiscriminately. Those who have placed them in the Asylum, or their parents, are alone admitted; but if they show a good disposition, the Superioress, at her discretion, admits a limited number to the taking the dress which distinguishes them from the other penitents. It is black. The rest wear coloured prints and coloured handkerchiefs. Two years are allowed them as a trial of their qualities and steadiness of purpose, after which they make their perpetual consecration to God. Jemima brooded over her own thoughts, and then

said, "No, Valerie; I cannot believe that the new novice has come here of her own free will to be a nun, she must have had some great disappointment in the world," and Jemima sighed deeply. "Ah!" said Valerie, with a little feeling of conscious superiority, "you don't understand these things yet." "No, my dear, nor ever shall," said Jemima, laughing. "You don't suppose you could ever persuade *me* to be consecrated. I shall go the very day after my two years are expired, if I stop as long, but I shall often come and see you, Valerie, and bring you news of the world; I shall not come, however, in such a hideous dress as this; and I shall bring you some pretty silks to make pin-cushions. Perhaps you may get a vocation for the world next, Valerie," said Jemima with a touch of her old levity. Valerie looked grave, and after giving Jemima time to laugh her laugh well out, said, "I hope Almighty God would take me from this life, rather than permit such a dreadful thing. You mean no harm, I know, Jemima, or I should not speak with you, but you are so thoughtless. I am glad our retreat is so near, it will do you so much good." "Now, you think I shall be preached into a vocation for consecra-

tion, do you not, Valerie?" Valerie made no reply, and after a pause Jemima said, "It is not often I laugh, or feel gay, and this humour will not last long, but I have seen my father to-day, and that has given me pleasure." She then relapsed into a thinking mood, and her usual rather sad thoughts.

The retreat for the penitents, which takes place the week before the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, was given by an able and holy priest, and Jemima was astonished to find they were to keep silence the whole day till the evening recreation, when they were expected to talk on the subjects they had heard preached upon during the day. Jemima wondered how all the noisy talking children would bear it; for herself she did not care, to be silent or speak was a matter of indifference to her, all things were so dull and uninteresting. She had nothing to live for, nothing to hope. She had offended God, but she would be careful to live a better life for the future; but her resolutions were without energy, and her life passed in a routine of tasteless monotony. She listened to Mother St. Stanislas's directions for the retreat without interest. They were to have half an hour's

meditation in the chapel at six o'clock, an instruction of the same length at nine, another at two, and the evening meditation of six o'clock was to finish the day's devotions—and enough too, thought Jemima. The opening sermon of the retreat did not greatly interest or touch our poor penitent, but she *listened*, and whilst the preacher exhorted his hearers to perform the exercises with attention, and to consider the great grace it was from Almighty God to be permitted to be present whilst so many thousands lost in sin were unable to obtain these advantages, and which they might perhaps make a better use of, Jemima wondered what he meant. To listen to sermons was doubtless very good, and to be silent was also good, for then the loud voices of the rough children would not trouble her, but to herself particularly she saw no extraordinary advantage in all this. The manner, too, of his address had nothing remarkable to attract a fanciful mind, or stir any peculiar feelings of devotion; it was clear, manly, and straight-forward, the language was adapted to his hearers, every one could *understand* what he said, and there were no fine rounded periods to please the taste

rather than benefit the soul. The next morning, however, when the meditation was made on "The End of our Creation," there were some remarks which startled Jemima. Was it possible that we were as solemnly bound to serve God as the preacher said! The possessor of an ox or an ass has a right to do what he pleases with his property, and do we not *rob* God when we follow our own will and pleasure, because we are as entirely *His* property as an animal belongs to its purchaser? In doing the will of God, however disagreeable to us, we do Him, *no favour*, but just our simple duty. This was new language to poor Jemima, who had so often done her own will; and still more when in the second meditation she found we were to use the goods of this world only as *lent* to us, and for the good or ill use of which we should most assuredly have to give an account to Almighty God, it was all so strange and new that our penitent did not know what to make of it. What the preacher reprehended as an insult to the Bountiful Giver of all good, namely, an indiscriminate use of all His gifts, taking food to satisfy our appetite, wearing clothes to gratify our vanity, was what she had

done all her life, without ever thinking of offering an especial thanksgiving to God for each daily comfort and support. She had thanked God in a general way for all His goodness, but to have the intention to praise God every time she had dressed or eaten, and to have thought of doing these agreeable things only because it was the will of God ; such an idea had never crossed her mind, and it was too high and too grand a thought for her to grasp at once. She could better understand what followed, the sanctifying our ordinary actions, and the meditation on our own sins. Then came the awful meditation on hell. Now, indeed, Jemima did feel something. Her imagination had full play. The description of the devils, their hatred of man, *because* he is created to the image of God, Whom the devils hate and fear,—the thought that if they were not restrained by the power of God, they would fall upon us and tear us in pieces, the goodness of God protecting us from this at present, but assuredly if we do not satisfy His justice by penance in this life, and are so unfortunate as to die at enmity with Him, though we had gained the whole world, we should have lived in vain. We talk of hell as a dreadful

place, and think none but great sinners go there. Let us examine the nature of the sin which would have condemned the whole human race to eternal torments, had not our Saviour purchased our ransom; one act of disobedience to God's command,—and are there any present who can say they are exempt from all more heinous sins? And look well at the penalty to avoid it whilst it is yet time. Who can bear to put a finger in the fire? yet it is only a little fire, and the finger is so small a part of the body. Even to put a finger in a candle,—what is a candle? A little flame; yet what pain it would cause! And the pain of soul, the pain of heart, who shall draw a picture of the sufferings of the soul in its bitter anguish! and this for ever and for ever! For all eternity!

The preacher, with a manner which gave a reality to what he said, continued till the penitents thought they could see the things he drew for their *warning*. This sermon was followed by one on confession,—but what was the mere act of confession? It was like driving out a fever, that is absolutely necessary, but there is still much to be done before the person is restored to health. The body must be strengthened by bitter draughts,

the soul must be treated in the same manner, by *daily* mortification the spiritual life must be restored. Let us accept with joy the affronts, the unjust treatment, and labour we have to encounter—a safe and easy penance. Jemima thought of the red-faced Bertille, but oh! how deep were these instructions sinking in her heart. She seemed entering on a new existence. What had she been doing hitherto? “Behold I will make all things new,” saith the Lord, and *now* indeed was the great hand which fashioneth the hearts, making new that of our conscience stricken penitent. To weep tears of true contrition was now her whole employment between the hours of the instructions, and every interval which could be spared from her work was spent in the chapel. Mother St. Stanislas gave her every advantage of leisure, and was rejoiced when, after the sermon on confession, Jemima asked if she might prepare to make a general confession. Her resolution to attempt this was strengthened on the third day, when for the evening’s meditation the clergyman chose the subject of death. How true it was, as he said, that in our last hour to procure a momentary ease for the body was what we most desired. Full of strange and new pains, was the soul then in

a state to prepare for its last account? We know by experience that a head-ache or a tooth-ache is enough to prevent a good examination of conscience, and that we think we do well under these circumstances to defer for another day our ordinary confession; but when there is no *other day* in prospect for us, when death advances, when the doctor has said there is no hope, and the priest of God is called to help the trembling soul to pass into eternity, is this the moment to seek a reconciliation with an offended God? And how many die worse off than this, without a second to prepare in! We often hear of sudden deaths, and do we think of the poor soul? Jemima listened with so strongly awakened an interest that the succeeding sermons and meditations, on the particular judgment, on the general judgment, on venial sin, and then on holy communion, seemed all *so short*, she could not believe that the good priest had been *more* than an hour engaged in each. With what sweet feelings of peace did she attend to the succeeding parts of this retreat! The Nativity, the losing the child Jesus, the finding Him in the temple, the hidden life of Christ, and on the holy presence of God. Perhaps nothing struck her more

than the "two standards." Daughter of a soldier, she had been accustomed from her infancy to martial scenes, and warlike sounds, and she was much moved by the strong outline drawn by the preacher, of the two parties who follow, the one the standard of Christ, and the other the standard of Lucifer. Christ has nothing to offer His followers in *this* life, but the certainty of a blissful eternity, but He himself shares with His people the same hardships and privations, the same bed, the same food, the same self-denial; and with tenderness and deep love He soothes their sorrows, binds their wounds, and with sweet words of encouragement entreats His people to save their souls. He says, I have nothing to offer you *now*, but mortification, *My* rewards are hereafter. I promise you strength for the battle now, and a crown of glory in heaven, but in the battle-field you must be content to be as your master, poor and despised, condemned, and laughed at, by the world. Christ's banner is unfurled; in the centre is a cross, and round it are the instruments of His passion. Lucifer's banner shows all the joys and pleasures of this world, which he parades with great pomp, but he says nothing of the next world, because

he has nothing but fire to give his disciples. There was something stirring in all this to Jemima, and yet it was not a bad excitement, for it left her resolved to do *something*. "What have I been doing all my life?" she asked herself. "Alas!" was the reply from her conscience, "little for God, *much* for Lucifer." But *now* all is to be changed, her general confession accomplished, her soul purified and whiter than snow, with what joy and delight did she listen to the concluding sermon of the retreat. Heaven seemed open to her as she listened to its description, and to the encouraging words of Father Rogerson. "It was in the power of every one to gain it." The instructions of that day sunk deep into her heart. "Yes, certainly, God wishes us to save our souls; He seeks the sinner, seeks the wanderer from the good path, guides, protects, sometimes chastises the rebellious soul, who strays from his 'Good Pastor,' but it is in love, for He hath given us His Son for our salvation, and shall He not with Him give us also all good things?"

Bright rose the sun on the morning of the 22d of June, 184—, and brighter far were the thoughts of many a heart in the Asylum of the

Good Shepherd. All was love and good-will—hopes renewed, affections changed, virtue implanted—much had been accomplished in that retreat. Blessed St. Ignatius, how many souls have thy exercises saved ! for all eternity thy brilliant crown shall be made more intense in glory by thy conquests from Satan ; and whilst, like a true follower of the blessed Jesus, thou art calumniated, and thy memory insulted, by those who will not understand thy virtues, in heaven thou shalt very often share the joy of the angels over one “ sinner doing penance.” At the time of which we are writing, some remarkable conversions were the consequence of the retreat, but it is of Jemima alone we will speak. Bertille sought her out on the morning in question, and, her red face redder than ever, she said, “ I think, Jemima, I have often vexed you, and been very rude, but if you will forgive me, I will do better in future.” Need we say that a cordial reconciliation was the consequence of this advance on Bertille’s part, and Jemima, not content with reproaching herself for her fastidiousness, asked Bertille’s pardon for her pride, and begged she would pray for her. “ I need your prayers, Bertille, and I hope you will forget and forgive the

past, and pray for me." "That I will, with all my heart, especially after holy communion this morning." Every Catholic who had assisted at the retreat was admitted to holy communion, and with sentiments of the deepest veneration and love, Jemima approached the holy table, she almost thought for the first time; so different were her present feelings of fervour and devotion from what she had ever experienced in her life before. After breakfast, the tongues were let loose, and what a noise was made! One would think each of the sixty penitents was trying to see which could speak the fastest. Jemima, who formerly was so angry with the noise, now laughed heartily, and entered into everybody's plans for the day. It was grand "*Dieu soit béni!*" that is, no silence was kept at all, and to a certain extent every one was allowed to do as they liked. Then it was the day of days for the penitents, for this was the only day of the year on which the religious were permitted to dine in their refectory, and there were great preparations. Such cutting of green boughs to decorate the place where Mother Superior was to sit—such running, and calling, and arranging, and disarranging—and such delightful confusion! To the surprise of

every one, Jemima entered into the plans of every little *washer*, who had formerly not dared to approach her awful presence, with real energy and good will. She had a hand to help everybody, and a heart so *very* light and happy. "Mother Superior wishes to see you in her room," shouted a child very loud—but Jemima did not, as she would have done before, stop her ears with her hands, and look affronted. She mounted the community stairs behind the religious who had been sent to fetch her with real satisfaction, for she loved Mother Superior, and nothing could have given greater pleasure to that tender Mother of so many souls, than the cheerful smile and look of content with which Jemima knelt for her blessing. "That is what I like to see, my dear child," said the Reverend Mother; "always look thus, and you will be happy yourself, and be agreeable to God." "I hope I shall be better than I have been, Mother Superior, and the first thing I ought to do is to ask your pardon for all the trouble I have given you. I have been so obstinate and self-willed, and you must have been shocked at me; and indeed now I am ashamed of myself; but I will try and do better, indeed I will," said

Jemima with great earnestness. "That is right, my dear child. Try to do what you can, and what you ought to do, and God will most assuredly do His part." "Do you quite forgive me all my naughtiness, Mother Superior?" "Quite, my child, all is forgotten; and now bring that little stool, sit down, and tell me what part of the retreat you liked best." Jemima did as she was bid, and considered awhile whether it was the description of the interior of Nazareth, and the dear child Jesus obeying His Blessed Mother, and St. Joseph, or the character of the Blessed Virgin, as given for the penitents to make their model. "But we are so different, Mother Superior," she added; "and then the calm with which she endured all her sorrows, because it was the will of God. Ah! I am afraid I never imitate it—I am so unwilling to bear the least trouble or suffering." "You must *try* though, my child, when God sends sorrows, to accept them—rejoice when He gives you joy, weep when He afflicts you, but recollect not to lose the peace of your soul. You may bear great things with outward composure, if you wish to suffer with a suffering Master. If you really wish to follow Christ, you cannot expect to be better treated than the man

of sorrows. But *to-day*, my dear child, you are to be happy and cheerful. After dinner, you are all coming into our garden, and you must look what apples have fallen after last night's high wind ; and as it is so fine a day I shall allow you to drink tea in the open air under your own trees. Let me see you enter into the amusements of the other penitents, for nothing would offend them more than the suspicion that you held yourself above them." " Oh ! Mother Superior, I have done with all that ; I have, indeed I have." " Well, we will see if a year hence you say the same. I shall put you in mind of your present good dispositions, and, my dear child, nothing can give me greater pleasure than to see you as you are. It is a great consolation to me to hope you have really benefitted by the retreat. You would be very unfortunate if you did not, my poor child, so be of good courage, and you will one day be a saint in heaven. I have this little cross and rosary for you, and when you say your rosary, say also a Hail Mary for me. Does so little make the tears come into your eyes, my child?—you must be strong and courageous, and not so full of *feeling*—and now go, may God Almighty bless you. Tell Sister St.

Agnes when she has re-conducted you to the class, to bring Olympiade to me. You may bid Olympiade good-bye, if you like, but do not tell the penitents that she is going to-day, it will make such a disturbance." "Going to-day, Mother Superior!" "Yes, my dear, she starts for Angers before our dinner. She wishes to begin her journey on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, and she has no inclination for the gaiety of this day in the Asylum." "What a mysterious person she is, Mother Superior; I admire, but could never *imitate* her." "Every one is not called to so high a state of penance; she would be culpable to neglect her vocation; but you must not imagine that it is necessary to be as austere as she is, to enter the kingdom of heaven—however, she is very edifying, and has the true spirit of a Magdalen."

END OF THE FOURTH CHAPTER.





CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

Peace and Rest.

—o—

THE PENITENT'S CONSECRATION AND DEATH.

—o—

"How great the trembling and the fear
When the tremendous Judge draws near,
When the great trumpet's blown!

"O'erwhelmed, oppressed with doubts and fears,
Their load my soul in anguish bears:
I sigh, I weep—accept my tears.

"Prostrate my contrite heart I rend,
My God, my father, and my friend,
Do not forsake me in the end."

Sequence for the dead.

"Ave Maria, when helpless I lie,
Exhausted with illness and gasping for breath,
When my soul is prepared from its prison to fly,
Oh lend me thine aid 'midst the terrors of death."

A YEAR had passed since the date of our last chapter, and *Jemima* was still in the Asylum, a very edifying penitent and generally very docile and obedient. She had nearly made shipwreck a few months after the feast of

St. Mary Magdalen. The occasion of it was her growing and too particular affection for Valerie, which caused numerous and petty jealousies amongst the rest. These fond attachments amongst the penitents are as much as possible discouraged by the religious, but it is not to be expected that these poor creatures will *at once* begin a perfect life. The great art of reforming the penitents is to endeavour, with the assisting grace of God, to turn to His service the very dispositions which have been abused in the world. To expect those whose lives have been passed in sin and degradation, whose study has been to deceive, whose hearts are hardened by habitual vice, to return to the path of virtue without an effort or a relapse would be to expect a miracle: to crush the buoyant spirits of youth, the thoughtless levity of self-willed independence, would defeat the object in view in affording them an asylum wherein to hide their shame and disgrace, and help them to recover their position in the world. But innocent gaiety *may* take the place of levity, docility and respect for their superiors *may* be inculcated, and the soul *may* be raised from its misery, *may*, and *has* been often turned from the service

of the devil to seek God and live for Him in the practice of virtue and peace. This, however, will never be accomplished by severity. The affections, to a certain extent, must be gained, that they may abandon themselves with confidence to those who govern them; and it is found that a spirit of simplicity and cheerfulness bears the surest and most lasting fruit amongst the penitents. Though it would seem that penance is the proper spirit of their state and position, yet they must be trained to it by gentle and imperceptible degrees. Their silence, then, is relieved by singing litanies and hymns to the airs they best like themselves, they have many days of recreation to relieve their usual hard labour, for labour they must, to atone for hours and hours of sinful idleness; their mental as well as bodily health and comfort being carefully attended to, they soon learn to look on the nuns as their best friends. How can they think otherwise when they see them, without hope of reward in *this* world, devote their lives to the arduous duties of their state? Jemima had become now convinced that the nuns did not wish to tease and annoy her, and that when

Mother St. Aloysius kindly but firmly told her she expected her to work a certain number of hours every day, it was perhaps for her good. It kept off troublesome thoughts, and yet she had such habits of listless idleness that she found it very disagreeable. However, towards the winter she became quite reconciled to it, and she embroidered all the pocket-handkerchiefs the mistress of work received with very graceful German letters, of her own design. It was towards Christmas that, sitting at the side of her dear friend Valerie, during one of the hours allowed for talking, after a pause, Valerie said, "How you cough, Jemima; where did you get that cold?" "Oh, my dear, it is no cold; I always have this cough in the winter, except, indeed, the winter I spent in Italy, the happy winter of my life. I had no cough then."—and Jemima sighed deeply. "You have been abroad, then," said Valerie; and the two friends, forgetful of the rule, began to talk with great interest over the scenes that Jemima had passed through. A few words in reference to Lord Henry Greenwood even were spoken, and all the beautiful places he had taken Jemima to see were described. The recreation passed rapidly,

so eagerly were the friends engaged in their conversation, and the signal for silence being given, they had yet only commenced the most interesting part of what Jemima had to tell and Valerie to listen to. But half-an-hour afterwards a change came over Valerie. No one is speaking to her—why has she coloured so? Why does she look so confused and sad? And what too is the matter with Jemima? Why does she lay that beautiful handkerchief on her knees, and look so listlessly at the name she is embroidering? Her thoughts are far, far away—her work disgusts her—the silence is insupportable—how vexed and disquieted she looks! What makes Valerie turn her eyes so often towards the placid nun who is presiding in the work-room; and why does she rise and approach Mother St. Stanislas? “Can I speak to you, mother, a few words in private, at your leisure?” “After supper, my dear, before I go to the community, I will call you.” When Mother St. Stanislas called Valerie to her, she was not surprised to hear what she had to say. She had observed the growing intimacy of the two friends, and only waited for a good opportunity to rectify this dangerous attachment. She spoke now with

kindness to Valerie, but told her that she must submit to the penance she had drawn upon herself. "You will not sit by Jemima during any of the recreations for a month from this time, and after that, only two or three times in the week. You see, my dear, how easily one fault draws on another. Had you been faithful to your rule, you would have avoided this; you have perhaps caused some useless regrets in Jemima, for I have been watching her since the recreation, and I observe her expression is quite changed." "I shall be very much grieved, mother, if I have, but the conversation came up so suddenly, I scarcely know how we got to talk of this gentleman." "Well, my child, let it be a lesson to you, and you will do well not to repeat what you have been saying to me." When Mother St. Stanislas called Jemima to her, she looked cross and discontented. "My dear child, what a face you have! Are you not well?" "I don't know, mother, what is the matter with me; I think the air here does not agree with me. I want change, perhaps." "Have you read the rule on particular friendships?" Jemima coloured. "Have you, my dear, said nothing this afternoon which you would be ashamed to say

openly before Mother Superior and myself?" I have said nothing very bad. I suppose Valerie has been telling you some tales, and I do not at all admire her for it; and really, if one's conversation even is to be repeated, things are come to a fine pass. To be watched about all day, and kept like a child from speaking of the most trifling thing that has ever happened to one, it is really quite disagreeable; and I shall wish, as soon as possible, to go home, for I think my father will receive me now, after being so many months in this house, will you be kind enough to mention this to Mother Superior?" Jemima stopped from want of breath and a violent fit of coughing. When she was again composed, and waiting for mother St. Stanislas's answer, this religious, who had sat quietly waiting for the end of this burst of passion, rose from her seat, and desiring Jemima to go to her supper, she left the cell and the astonished Jemima, who expected to be soothed and persuaded to stop, and was therefore quite disappointed at so little being done to put her in good humour again. When the Superioress was informed of all this, she smiled and said, "I do not fear Jemima's going in this way *now*, six

months ago she might have been less tractable." But when Jemima returned to the class, and as usual was going to place herself at the side of Valerie, she was quite indignant to find Valerie move away, and on asking an explanation of this conduct, she was more than ever angry to hear of the penance imposed, "through your stupidity and nothing else" Valerie, how you could think of going to repeat such a conversation to the nuns, of course *they* would not approve it." Valerie made no reply, but she thought to herself, "I have been to blame, and I never will hide a fault from those who have been under God the means of my perseverance in virtue." Jemima did not again see Mother St. Stanislas that night, but the first thing in the morning she sought her, to say that she had passed a restless night, and could stop no longer in a house where her feelings were so little thought of. "I have tried to do everything you wish, and everything the rule prescribes, and I think it is very hard to be punished for so trifling a thing as talking a little of one's travels. Do you intend, mother, to allow me to see Mother Superior?" asked Jemima, with a return of her old imperious manner. Mother St. Stanislas said, "The Supe-

rioreess will see you in the course of the morning," and she then turned to the other children to occupy herself in seeing them placed at their needlework. Jemima sat with her work on her lap untouched, with tears of vexation and hurt pride coursing each other down her heated cheeks. It was a bright frosty morning, and she had not waited long ere the summons to the religious' garden made her rise quickly from her seat, and scarcely asking permission from Mother St. Stanislas to go out, she followed the nun who had come for her to the middle walk of the nuns' garden, where she found the Superioress walking up and down. She approached the Reverend Mother to whom she was really attached, and whom she always saw with pleasure, but the first glance at the Superioress' grave face chilled her. "You asked to see me, Jemima," said the Reverend Mother, without stopping in her walk. "Yes," was the concise reply, for the tone of the Reverend Mother's voice was not encouraging for complaints. How it happened she could not tell, but all the subjects which Jemima thought a few minutes ago so grievous, looked nothing at all, and she felt ashamed to own that she had been in a passion, and wanted to go

away. They walked in silence. They reached the end of the walk, they turned, and turned again at the other end, and not a word was spoken; again the third time they trod the same ground, and Jemima's agitation increasing every minute, she thought she could hear her own heart beat; but when the Superioress entered the path which led towards the convent, Jemima threw herself at her feet, and in a voice choked with tears entreated that Mother Superior would not leave her thus. "I was waiting for you to begin; I thought you wished to see me." "But you are angry with me Mother Superior, I am sure you are, or you would never be so silent." "Do you think I have reason to be pleased, but rise, my dear, I will take another walk. You wish to go, I hear, but just look back upon the last four-and-twenty hours, and examine the faults you have committed. From a motive of vanity you must tell a companion that you have travelled, and then you permitted your imagination to dwell on those scenes which it should be the business of your life to *forget*. Worse than this, you communicate to your friend the company in which you were,—though Valerie is a very good child, she was not watchful, and

listened,—you then spoke of Lord Henry ; she must in a moment have understood your connection with him, and you might have thus exposed her to many sinful recollections. Who can tell what dangerous thoughts may not in a few minutes be raised in the mind, and I am sure you would feel very much distressed, if you had caused a storm of passion in the heart of your friend. You see here that there is a very grave fault, beside the imprudence for yourself. Almighty God will not work miracles to preserve us from evil, and whilst we daily pray, ‘lead us not into temptation,’ we are bound to avoid the *thoughts*, and subjects of conversation, the company or sights which might *lead* us to sin. I feel convinced that during that conversation you had some regretful thoughts of your late unfortunate engagements, and that the fear of offending God was *not* the most prominent thought in your mind.” “Oh, Mother Superior, I have been very wrong—” “And then, my dear, your passion and disrespectful conduct to your mistress ; Jemima, you have disappointed me. I thought after the retreat, you were going to be so very good, and now you wish to go out, because you have merited a good punishment

and have gotten a little one. I am quite sorry." Jemima could only answer by her tears. After a pause, the Reverend Mother continued: "What do you intend to do, my dear?" "To submit, Mother Superior, to whatever penance you impose, and not to think of leaving your kind care if you will allow me to try again to do better." "That is well, so now go and ask pardon of Mother St. Stanislas for your rudeness to her, and we will pray and hope that there will be no repetition of such conduct. For your penance you will to-day walk alone in the garden, during the recreation, or go to the chapel if you prefer it, but you will speak to no one in the class to-day, and for a month you will not sit by Valerie at any of the recreations. Will you do this, and do it *cheerfully*, and then avoid the like faults again." Jemima did all that was required of her, and after the month was passed, she spoke occasionally to Valerie, but both avoided too intimate a friendship, and Jemima behaved very well from that time to the period at which our history recommences.

We shall now introduce our readers to the mid-day recreation of the community, where Sister Mary of St. Theresa, the novice, and the

rest of the nuns, were spending a very cheerful hour as usual, for the constitutions recommending that all who came to the recreation should do so with a "sweet and gentle gaiety," they would have thought it a fault to have brought sad and sorrowful looks. They were talking of the retreat that the penitents were keeping, and a postulant who had lately arrived was inquiring *why* all the nuns did not go to the sermons, and not being of a very clear mind, it was in vain to explain to her that *the Rule* forbade it, that it was marked in the constitutions that none but the first mistress should assist at the instructions given to the penitents during their retreat. This young lady could not understand it; "she should so like to hear the way in which the penitents were preached to," and the grave looks of the nuns did not in the least abash her curiosity. But she had had her own way very much in the world, being an only child of a widowed mother, and we will hope that in time, she will better comprehend the respect with which a good religious speaks of the least observance marked in the constitutions. "And we have St. Augustin's rule, dear Reverend Mother," said the talking postulant. "Yes, my dear child, replied the

Superioress, "and in it you will read that the modesty of a religious is the most agreeable quality she can possess. He would not have approved of a postulant, who had not been two weeks in her convent, asking so many questions of the professed nuns. The silence which this little address produced was happily broken by the entrance of Mary Joseph, dragging a great hamper with her. She handed a letter to the Reverend Mother, and said, "The Marchioness of Westlipool has sent her man-servant with this hamper, for the penitents' feast to-morrow." "How kind, how good, she is," was uttered by many voices, who had experienced her generosity many times, particularly at the happy season of Christmas. The note was read, and then the Reverend Mother desired the hamper to be unpacked. With many expressions of pleasure and innocent surprise, the materials for a *very* large plum-pudding were produced, and at the bottom of the hamper lay two sirloins of beef. Mary Joseph managed to make herself heard by the Superioress amidst the laughter and noise, and said, "The man has another great basket of fruit." The Reverend Mother was obliged to clap her hands for silence, and then said, "One

would think you were all children, and had never seen raisins and lemons before." "Oh! ma mère," said one, "we *are* children, but we are mothers too, and our children in the other house will be so delighted to-morrow to find they are to have a real treat, for they think nothing of an ordinary dinner of pudding and meat, on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen." "Mary Joseph," said the Reverend Mother, "will you be so kind as to tell the Depensièrre to give Lady Westlipool's servant some refreshment, and whilst he is taking it I will write a line to her Ladyship." Mary Joseph did so, and afterwards brought in the hamper of fruit:—there were currants and gooseberries in abundance, enough to satisfy the fruit-loving taste of even *sixty* penitents. After the letter was despatched, the conversation turned on Lady Westlipool. "Has she a religious vocation?" interrupted the postulant. Some of the sisters smiled at her simplicity, but the Reverend Mother said gravely, "no, my dear, not that I am aware of." "She might have, some day," replied the same voice; but, after a pause, added, as if answering herself, "I suppose she is too old." "It is not her age, Sister Postulant,"

said Sister Mary of St. Aloysius : " can anything be more edifying than our Sister Mary of St. Hilda? and she was fifty when she entered the order." " There was at Perpignan," said Sister Assistante, " a holy soul, who became a religious at the time of my superiority there, who was sixty years of age. She of course did not practise the rule in every particular, because of her age, but she was admirable. She was a benefactress, and as such had a claim to certain exemptions ; and the church there was built with part of her fortune." " My dear mother," said Sister Mary of St. Joseph, with a sigh, " I wish *we* had some benefactresses who would build *us* a church, it's so hot in our chapel, with its low roof ; and yet I love our little chapel, and all that belongs to this house." " You had better pray that Almighty God would give us the means to raise the building of the penitents, that we may receive more, and thus save more souls." " I do, dear mother, every day ; and certainly I would not wish an inch of ground added to our premises till that was accomplished—but I feel as if that were tolerably secure now. There is something already collected at the bank, is there not? and how easy it would be

for some good person, touched by the grace of God, to send us a nice large sum—what would it cost *some* people to write us a cheque for a thousand pounds!" There was a general laugh at Sister Mary of St. Joseph's magnificent ideas; and then she was told to pray for another Miss H—— to appear. "Miss H——!" said the new postulant, "who was Miss H——?" Sister Mary of St. Theodore looked very hard at the postulant, and tried by a sign to repress her perpetual questioning; but as yet the scenes in the Convent were so new and so charming to this young person, that she could not be restrained in her continual inquiries. The Reverend Mother saw the perplexity of the Mistress of the Novices, and expecting that in time the postulant would have asked and been answered everything, said, "never mind, tell her about Miss H——. Sister Mary of St. Aloysius, you tell that story very often, would it tire you to repeat it?" "Oh no, ma mère. You must know then, Sister Postulant, that poor as we are now, we were once much more so"—"Are you so very poor?" interrupted the postulant. "If you ask *one* question more, I shall leave off my history; shall I, ma mère?" "It would be a

good punishment," said the Superioress, "for this inquisitive child." There was much laughter; but Sister Mary of St. Aloysius continued her story. "Where was I? oh, at the poverty; yes, it's very true, we had to depend on any one who would do us the charity to say Mass, for we had no house for a priest, no means to entertain one, and no hopes of having one. Two years ago, we had missed Mass *two* Sundays from these unfortunate circumstances. Palm Sunday was approaching: our Mother wrote to the Bishop to say that, though the priests of Hammersmith were most kind in coming to give us holy communion, yet as the Rev. Mr. C—— was seriously ill, it would be impossible to leave the parish church on this Sunday, where two Masses were always said, a high and a low one. Would his Lordship give permission that we should break the enclosure on this occasion and walk to the low Mass, at half-past seven o'clock, at the Benedictine Convent, whose chapel also serves for the parish. We got the permission; and on a cold frosty morning, we went forth two and two in procession. I suppose the people in Hammersmith are not early risers, for there was no one in the streets.

Our mother had taken the precaution to secure the services of a policeman, in case there might be a crowd, and some gentlemen who were at early Mass also accompanied us back. But the people who saw us returning behaved very well. We were greatly stared at, I believe, but nothing more occurred. We were told afterwards, there were some window curtains opened, and people in night-caps looked out, and servant maids cleaning the doors called to their companions to run and see. We certainly were well attended home, but nothing disagreeable happened. It was eight o'clock, and the first omnibuses were preparing to start; and there was 'Jim, come and see'—'look here, Tom,' and so on; but we heard afterwards that it was considered a beautiful sight. Each one of us carried our palm branch in her hand, returning home"—

"Who walked first?" interrupted the postulant.

"Now you have lost your story; has she not, *ma mère*?" Sister Mary of St. Aloysius stopped, and there was a burst of laughter. When comparative silence was once more restored, the Reverend Mother said, "I will take pity on our postulant, because she looks so very disappointed; and you were a little long, Sister

Mary of St. Aloysius." "Yes, ma mère, I was on purpose," replied the sister, laughing, "because I was sure she would never listen to the end without asking a question." "Well, my dear," resumed the Reverend Mother, addressing the postulant, "there were three religious walking first, our penitents came after, and the rest of the religious closed the procession, as our sister calls it; we walked in our habits, with our veils half down, and the penitents were also in their costume. It has since been mentioned to me that the modesty and propriety of the penitents' appearance, both in the church and in the street as they walked, was matter of surprise and edification to those who saw them. Miss H——, who was a personal friend of mine, and very kind and generous in giving us little things for our poor chapel, was lying dangerously ill. This 'going out' of ours was talked of very much in Hammersmith, perhaps the more so because we keep enclosure, and the penitents also while under our care are never allowed to leave the house. It came to Miss H——'s ears and was even a matter of conversation with her. She made some addition to her will and left us a thousand pounds,

which has enabled us to build the small house at the entrance of the enclosure, now inhabited by our chaplain. She died the Thursday after Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, the day on which our Saviour instituted the blessed rite of the Eucharist, and it was very affecting to all of us, from these peculiar circumstances, to pray for the repose of the soul of this good and charitable lady. Miss H—— has then had the merit of contributing to the spiritual assistance of many souls, for having once a house to receive a priest in, we have managed to have Mass ever since. But Sister Mary of St. Joseph's grand idea of cheques for a thousand pounds is one of her own making; such things do not come often; this is the only legacy we have ever received in this country." "Ah, ma mère," said Sister Mary of St. Joseph, "you laugh, but I am sure I know people who could give us such a sum and not be poorer at the end of the year." "True, daughter, but they do not give their *thousands*; if all who know of the existence of this order would give their one or two pounds annually, I should be grateful and satisfied, nor should I have one thought when the butcher and baker send their heavy

bills as to how they are to be paid. If ever I have an anxiety of mind it is when I consider the affairs of the house. Without permanent funds, without resource of any kind except the work of the penitents, and a few, *very few*, kind friends who do what they can for us, it is indeed a great undertaking, the enlarging the house and increasing the number of penitents. But," added the Reverend Mother, cheerfully, "we must never lose our trust in Divine Providence. If God clothes the lilies of the field He will not leave us destitute, and He who has done so much from our small beginnings in this country, will not cease to protect and assist us." The inquisitive postulant was waiting with her eyes wide open to ask a number of particulars respecting this legacy and its employment, when the Obedience bell ringing, she was obliged to leave the room, for, till they ask to make their "essai," no postulant is permitted to assist at the community exercises. After having received the holy habit they are initiated into every thing, that during the two years' noviciate they may prove if they are really called to religion. The nuns, as usual, ranged themselves along the room in their rank, and after

the momentary silence, the Reverend Mother said the words always used,—“ Sisters, have you any thing to say?” and, as was customary at the mid-day recreation, “the Angel” said her sentence. This day she said, “I have read in the ‘Nun Sanctified,’—‘Obey with a good will; serving God rather than men. Your obedience shall never be cheerful unless it proceeds from a motive of pleasing God, Who can never err in His precepts, and Who commands only what will be profitable to us.’” We should explain to our readers that “the Angel” was a religious who took her turn to remind the sisters of the holy presence of God three times during each recreation, and who had to say some pious sentence at the mid-day Obedience, and at eight o'clock in the evening, when either a lecture for this remaining half-hour before Matins was read, or the Superioress gave permission to talk by saying, “Dieu soit beni nos sœurs, our entertainment must be of something profitable.” As there was nothing remarkable to recommend at this Obedience, after the visit to the Blessed Sacrament the sisters retired each to her employment, and the Superioress sent for Jemima to her room. After a few words about

this, the second retreat Jemima had had the privilege to make, Jemima was unusually silent. The Reverend Mother looked at her for some moments, to understand her, and Jemima looked on the floor, deep in thought. At last, she raised her eyes and smiled, and the Reverend Mother said kindly, "What is it, my dear? You look quite important; but not unhappy, I think; no trouble is there?" "Oh no, Mother Superior, but I am so astonished at myself, and you will be so too, and perhaps you will laugh, but really I am in earnest. "Well, what is it? "I am almost afraid to tell you, and yet it makes me very happy. Should you think me very presumptuous to think of being consecrated?" and Jemima got very red as she spoke this sentence quickly and as if it were quite a relief to get it out. "Not presumptuous," replied the Reverend Mother; "it cannot be presumptuous to desire to serve God, to give ourselves to Him entirely, and to take the best means He puts in our power to save our souls; but it may be the mere effect of the retreat, which has given you the thought from some great truths having been put before you in a striking manner. Do not try either to

force yourself to think you must be consecrated, or to crush the thought, but quietly endeavour to perform all your duties with more and more attention, and we shall see what *time* brings, for *perseverance* is the test of all good things. But why do you sit with your hand on your side, Jemima; have you any pain?" "A little, Mother Superior, but it is nothing." "Do you feel any ill effects from the last inflammation?" "I think not; I am quite well, and shall get strong with this warm weather." "Do you eat your food and sleep well?" "Yes—no—Yes, sometimes." The Reverend Mother smiled as she touched Jemima kindly on the head and gave her a blessing, as the signal to go. But the thought of consecration did not pass from Jemima's mind; it daily strengthened, and in the autumn of the same year the Reverend Mother gave her permission to write to her father to ask his leave to entertain this intention. The answer of Captain Ambrose was addressed to the Reverend Mother, and was most unexpected. He was in treaty for his majority, and to obtain it he would have to leave the regiment. That which he would be promoted to was just returned from India, and the major

whose rank he would have had, died on the passage home. He would join the detachment at Edinburgh, and as his own regiment was going to New South Wales, there would be no fear of his daughter being recognised, or her history known in his new regiment. He begged the Superioress also to do what she thought most judicious, for he would rather leave everything in her hands, and he should be quite satisfied with what she decided upon: all he meant to say was, that he and Mrs. Ambrose would receive Jemima back again with the greatest affection; no *remembrance even* of the past would ever disturb their peace, and the resolution she had shown in persevering where she was, was the best guarantee they could have of her future good conduct. Mother Superior sent for Jemima, and communicated to her the contents of her father's letter. Jemima listened attentively; and visions of home, and her dear father, her sisters and brother, and the joys of domestic life, floated before her eyes, but before the letter was finished she had made her choice. "No, Mother Superior, I would rather remain in the Asylum. It would be very delightful, and sounds very like a return of old happiness, but it is better for me to be here. I

am not sure what I might do in the world, I am a poor weak creature, and I know my weakness. I should be thrown into gay society again ; I should be led away by things which I should not think wrong, but which might be dangerous for me. If I may choose for myself, I choose to stop with you." "Do nothing suddenly or rashly, my dear child, lest afterwards you might repent of it: Take some days to consider of your father's kind proposal. You might be useful to your family, and assist in educating the younger children, and you have been here now so many months, that I hope and believe you would mix with the world without the slightest danger. I should not have been so content to see you go a year ago, nor would you, my dear child, have been so willing then perhaps to stop with us." Jemima smiled. "But now I could see you return to your father's good care, without a moment's anxiety, and should rather hope that you would be an edification to those you mix with, instead of running any danger yourself; recollect that God does not call every one to a life of retirement, that He offers the means of sanctification *to all*, in the world as well as in the cloister, and you can do the holy will of God

better in the bustle of the world than you will in a situation which looks more as if it would conduce to sanctity, if you are *not* especially called by God to that situation." "I think I understand you quite, dear Mother Superior, but may we not choose the best means we know of to help us on in the path to heaven?" "It is our bounden duty, and the neglect of such means might endanger our salvation, but do not think, my dear child, that every one is obliged to leave the world or lose their soul. God leaves many good Christians in society to give example to their neighbours, and the soldier, the statesman, the magistrate, and the tradesman can each sanctify their state by living according to the rule of the Gospel." "Yes, Mother Superior, but they must live a life of piety, must they not?" "*It is imperative*; they will be judged by the same rule, and all will stand or fall at the last, according to whether they have lived up to the commands of Christ or not." "I will stop here, Mother Superior, if you please." "Well, my child, I will write to your father, but as there is no hurry, you had better make a Novena to know the Divine will in your regard. You will say the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Our Father, and a

Hail Mary, every day for nine days, and at the end of that time I will see you again." The Superioress wrote to Captain Ambrose, expressing her great satisfaction and the comfort she received, in being able to say that she thought she could see Jemima return to her home without a doubt of her perseverance in good. "She has profited in a singular manner by the instructions and good advice she has received here, and is a true penitent, and a most interesting and amiable child. We shall really be sorry to lose her if she go, but it is right she should return to you if that be her choice, only I fully expect she will remain firm to her resolution, and at the end of her Novena, she will write to you herself to say so. I am much obliged by the liberty you give me, and I shall ever esteem it a pleasing duty to watch over and conduct the soul of your daughter, according to the light that God shall give me, for that purpose."

The Superioress was right; at the end of her Novena Jemima wrote a most affecting letter to her father, in which her tender love for him was strongly contrasted with her earnest desire to serve God with all her heart; and the strong resolution with which she chose the lowly, un-

noticed path of life, as a penitent of the Good Shepherd, in preference to the brilliant career again opened to her, showed the sincerity of her conversion. The father read her letter with tears of mingled joy and regret, and wrote to give her his full and unreserved permission to be consecrated and pass her days in her present tranquil home. During the months that preceded her consecration, she was very often called for by the Reverend Mother, who gave her much good advice, and listened to all she had to say, of her hopes and fears for the future. "You must not, my dear child, form exaggerated ideas about your consecration. I like to hear you speak of doing penance, but I must also see you cheerful." Jemima smiled, and *did* look cheerful. "I am not unhappy, Mother Superior, but I do not understand why it is that since I have been in this house, I have looked upon myself with such different eyes, I feel as if I were the most guilty creature that ever lived. I sinned so against my conscience. I had been well educated ; I knew my religion ; I had a happy home, a kind father, and wanted nothing ; it is my ingratitude to God for all His favours which so oppresses me at

times." "But in receiving the uniform of consecration, you expect to be happy, do you not, my dear?" "I do not think so much about *happiness* now, Mother Superior. I wish to please God, and save my soul in atoning for the past, and I think it will be a great privilege for me to be kept here always." "That is a good child; and remember one thing, that whatever mortification you embrace, you must let it be between God and yourself. With your health you cannot fast, you cannot do anything which requires strength, but you can bear little contradictions, and vexations from the other penitents, for the love of God, without showing any anger, you can mortify your curiosity, and your quickness of temper without its ever being perceived by any one, and have a great merit without any of your companions suspecting it, or looking upon you as a very holy person; but I don't think, Jemima, there is much danger of that, is there?" added the Reverend Mother, smiling. "Do the penitents treat you better now? You were not I think a favourite with them at first." "It was my own fault, I was so proud with them." "True, and they made you suffer for it; but courage my

child, this will not prevent your getting your place in heaven, and the little jealousy they had is gradually passing away, I think." "Oh, Mother Superior, I do not mind it so long as I can have the consciousness of not displeasing God; and it is not *all* the children, *some* are most kind to me."

The second spring Jemima passed in the Asylum was marked by an event which caused some hearts to beat rather quickly with apprehension amongst the penitents. Three of them were discovered to have held repeated bad conversations together, and the attempt to draw a fourth into their company was the occasion of the discovery. This penitent felt a remorse of conscience, and came to Mother St. Stanislas to say that she had transgressed the rule in listening to conversation which she knew was not right, and she was very sorry. The three were expelled by the Superioress without delay, the time only that was necessary to write to their parents elapsed, for no penitent is ever sent from the Asylum unprotected or without informing those who recommended them. This sudden punishment of a fault, which was not frequent because it was always checked, and peculiar care

was taken to prevent it, was salutary in its effects, and was perhaps the means of restraining others who might have been less careful, had not they had before their eyes the regret and shame which these penitents experienced when, notwithstanding their prayers and entreaties, they were sent to their homes. The most painful part to the Superioress was refusing the mothers and fathers, but the fault was that which she would never allow amongst the penitents, and these three, though comparatively recent comers, were quite aware of the rule and quite aware of the wicked nature of their conversation. Strange to say, however, when it came to the punishment, the being sent from the Asylum, you would think they had been very good, and the means of reformation were taken from them, so loud were their lamentations, so great their grief. From that time things went on well and quietly in the class, and many profited by their stay in the house. The spring passed, the summer advanced, the feast of St. Mary Magdalen was approaching, and all looked forward to it with interest; some with very deep feelings of joy and awe. Jemima was as usual ailing, yet able to go about, and though unconscious of the malady

which was daily gaining ground upon her constitution, she experienced many solemn and touching thoughts, partly occasioned by the constant preparation of mind she cultivated as the day of her first consecration to God came nearer, and partly induced by that disease, which, whilst it preys upon the body, appears to spiritualize and refine the mind.

Jemima Neville, whom we introduced to our readers in the first chapter, and afterwards as Sister Mary of St. Theresa, was now professed ; and, to the surprise of all, was an active and most efficient help in the class of penitents. She had had the charge of teaching the catechism at first, that she might see how she could bear to be with the penitents : the Constitutions of the order wisely ordain that none shall be professed but such as have had an experimental knowledge of what their fourth vow may oblige them to ; that is, should they be appointed by the Superioress to go to the class. The sisters wishing much for her perseverance were delighted to find her able and willing "to work for the salvation of souls," actually and in contact with the penitents. She was always self-possessed, always calm, and there seemed a native

dignity in her soul which commanded respect. She not only gained the confidence of the poor uneducated persons she taught, but kept them in admirable order. There was not a penitent in the class who dared to make the slightest approach to familiarity with her, however bold she might be, and Sister Mary of St. Theresa was after her profession distinguished with an important charge amongst the penitents, a charge for which older and less attractive persons might have been thought better calculated by a stranger, but which the Reverend Mother with her usual discrimination gave to this young professed. To relieve the one who had already been long employed there and required rest, she made Sister Mary of St. Theresa second mistress of the class. She was, we must confess, greatly changed from the simple postulant, Jemima Neville; she was grown into a thoughtful woman, and was one of those rare instances of a creature reared in all the luxuries of life, flattered without becoming vain, indulged by all her family without becoming selfish, and walking untainted through the dangerous paths of life. She daily valued more and more the grace of her vocation, and was a bright example in the order

she had embraced. She had ever retained a particular interest in Jemima, from her having entered the Asylum the same day that she herself entered the Convent, and now that with broken health the poor penitent was preparing to offer the short remains of her blighted life to that God Whom she had offended, Sister Mary of St. Theresa was afraid to take much notice of her, lest the softened feelings she had towards the patient sufferer should be unbecoming a nun who was mother to all the penitents, and should therefore have no preferences. The first thought of her own state of health came upon Jemima, during the retreat of three days which she made previous to the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, the day fixed for her consecration. It was during the course of the prayers appointed for her to say, that she began to think how ill she was. She was reading the "preparation for death." She had made the "act of resignation," the "act of receiving death as a chastisement for sin," the "desire to render to Jesus Christ death for death," the "acts of contrition, of faith, hope, and charity;" she had made the "spiritual communion," and she continued the "acts of contrition for the sins committed by each of the

senses." "By the eyes:—O Jesus! my Saviour and my God, I most humbly ask pardon of you, for all the sins I have committed by so many forbidden looks, and for the tears I have uselessly shed; and to efface them, apply to me the loving looks which You threw from the cross on those who crucified You, and the tears which You have shed for my salvation." "The ears:—Pardon me also the sins I have committed by so many bad discourses, which I have taken pleasure in listening to; and to satisfy for them apply to me the merits of the patience and humility with which You have listened to so many blasphemies, insults, and calumnies which have been offered to You." She continued the acts for the senses, then the preparation for the approach of the agony, and her vivid imagination could picture all that she might feel when in reality the time *did* arrive to prepare to meet God. "It must be an awful time," thought Jemima, "and it is best to be prepared beforehand, for if I should die, as little Laura did, I could not in the midst of such an agony say prayers, or think of anything but my sufferings."

On the 22d of July Jemima was awake very early, and the chapel was decorated for the oc-

casion of her consecration. She was permitted for that day to choose whatever she thought best for the purpose from amongst the dresses she had brought with her, when she entered the Asylum two years and a half ago. The trunk was opened, and she found a simple white muslin which she would have liked if Mother Superior would give permission for her to wear it. The dress was submitted to the inspection of the Mother Superior and approved, and Jemima had to make some alterations in it, such as adding long sleeves, and reducing the size of the body, for she had become lamentably thin since it was first made. There was not a cloud in the sky ; it was one of those days when the blue of the heavens is so intense that you can fancy it is transparent, and that if you looked hard you could see into heaven. Jemima's dress when washed was so pure a white, and her little net frill close to the throat was so modest, and her long clear muslin veil, as white as the dress, was so emblematical of what she was about to do—shroud herself from the world—that those strangers who were admitted, were greatly affected. After Mass and communion, Jemima came to the front of the penitents'

chapel. It was indeed a beautiful and touching sight, and the more so from the look of ill-health which pervaded her whole person. The brilliant eye and hectic cheek spoke of the ravages going on within ; and when she answered the questions of the officiating priest, in a voice low but sweet, there was scarcely a dry eye amongst the seculars present. The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* having been said, the officiant presented Jemima with a lighted wax candle, saying, "Take my child, this material light, figure of the Divine grace which has enlightened your soul:" after a momentary pause he continued; "My child, what do you ask for?" Jemima replied in a trembling accent, "Reverend father, I desire and solicit the favour of a consecration for one year in this holy refuge of penance." Her voice was scarcely audible at first, but as she proceeded she gained courage, and was distinctly heard in the most remote part of both chapels when she made her act of consecration. She perhaps excited more sympathy and interest from the evident state of her health and her feeble voice, than had she been stronger and her voice louder. The officiant next said, "Make your act of consecration."

Jemima said distinctly, "Reverend father, I consecrate myself to Jesus and Mary, to pass my days in this Asylum of retreat and silence ; that I may live under the rule of the penitents, by the guidance of our honoured Mother Superior, and under the authority of His Lordship the Bishop, Vicar Apostolic of the London District. I embrace with all my heart mortification and humiliation, under the protection of St. Mary Magdalen, our illustrious patroness. Oh! my God, I expect from Your goodness the grace of my perseverance." There was as it were the drawing of a deep breath when she had finished. The officiant then said : "Thank the Lord Who, in his mercy, has drawn you from the perils of a seductive world, and caused you to choose penance for your portion in this holy retreat : persevere in your holy resolution, and God Who is infinitely good, will be your eternal recompense." Whilst the officiant was blessing, with appropriate prayers, the cord, cincture, and rosary, Jemima retired to a little parlour near the chapel to put on the black serge dress, with large sleeves like those of a religious habit, which she was now to wear. Mother St. Gervais also put on, with great ex-

pressions of delight, the apron of black merino, the handkerchief of the same material with the IHS embroidered in white; and she changed the little white net cap Jemima had worn for the ceremony, for a cap of the rule. The change in her appearance when she returned into the chapel was very great. The officiant now presented her with the cincture or waistband, which was of black leather, with brass bound eyelet holes to admit the prongs which fastened it round the waist, saying, "Take, my child, this cincture to mark your union with God, that you may never be separated from His love." In giving the cord, which was of white wool, he said, "Wear this cord as an irrevocable gage of your consecration to the Mother of God." In giving the rosary, "Wear this rosary in sign of the love you will always retain for the Queen of Angels, in gratitude for the benefits you have received through her intercession. Henceforth you will be called Mary of the Seven Dolours." The benediction was then given: "*Gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et caritas Dei sit cum omnibus vobis, in nomine Patris, ✠ et Filii, ✠ et Spiritus ✠ Sancti.* Retire in peace, my dear child, have confidence; God has

found agreeable your holy resolutions, hope from His mercy the happiness to persevere in them." The psalm *Laudate Dominum* was then sung with real enthusiasm by the penitents; and Mary of the Seven Dolours walked from the chapel a "consecrated penitent of the Good Shepherd."

On her return to the class the children crowded round her to congratulate with her, and many had little presents, and some little letters for her. She smiled sweetly upon all, and thanked them most kindly, and looked and felt so calm and joyful that it did good to those who saw her even to look at her. The penitents were no judges of health, and the very marks which gave pain to those who saw their source, were the cause of admiration to them. Mary was sent for to the Community, and there, seated on a little stool at the Reverend Mother's feet, she received the kind encouraging words of those who spoke to her with deep feelings of gratitude. What a spring of joy comes from the bottom of her heart! In the days of her most intoxicating pleasure in the world was there ever a day she felt as she feels now? Never; for her present happiness has no alloy, her conscience is untroubled. Sister Mary of St. Theresa sat

silently considering the new consecrated, and a tear unbidden stole into her eye as she watched the hurried laboured breathing of this interesting child of her name in the world. The hectic flush and short cough, and the unnatural look altogether pained her. Mary looked like beautiful death, and the nuns all felt a tender sympathy for her. Sister Mary of St. Theresa laid her hand on her crucifix under the scapular, without being noticed, and a murmured *Fiat voluntas tua* put all right in her heart again. The tear did not run over; it seemed to go back to its source, and she joined in the cheerful conversation around Mary. The nuns all made her little presents of some kind or another, and the Reverend Mother made her rich by giving her a little framed print and a rosary. After her visit to the community the dinner was served, and the children had grand "Dieu soit beni," all day, even in the refectory. The nuns, as usual on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, dined in the penitents' refectory, and after dinner the penitents were allowed to go into the religious' garden. Mary of the Seven Dolours, as she was now called, sought Mother Superior, and showed her the letters she had received

As this is a true story we will here give *verbatim* two of these. The first was from a child who had been consecrated for two years, and at the end of that time was found unfit to make her perpetual consecration, and not wishing it either, she was about to return to the world. She wrote :—

“I cannot find words to address you with, for the happiness you now enjoy in giving yourself entirely to Jesus and Mary. I must tell you that I quite envy you in your happiness. I hope that you will never forget to offer up a prayer for the safety of my poor soul that will be exposed to all the dangers of a wicked world. I hope and trust that I shall not be quite forgotten by you. At least I know very well that you will enjoy such great happiness that you will not let worldly people enter your mind. My dear sister, I hope that you will always enjoy the same happiness that you do on this day. I wish you a very happy feast and many returns of them, in this holy house, under the guidance of our dear and honoured Mother Superior. I hope, my dear sister, you will pardon the liberty I take in writing these few lines to you, but as it is the only way in which I can express my

affection for you, and as I have no doubt but that it will be the last opportunity I shall have of writing to you whilst I am under this happy roof, but still I never shall forget the only one that ever tried to soften my pains and struggles. I hope that you will enjoy good health and many years, if it is the holy will of Almighty God, but death is uncertain, therefore we should always be prepared for it, but I need not tell you that, it is only necessary for such as myself. I must now conclude with begging that you will not forget to pray for me when I am gone, that I may try to love and serve Almighty God all my life. Believe me, my dear Sister, to remain

Your affectionate Sister,

ALBERIQUE.

Please to accept this little present."

We give this letter because we wish our readers to understand the spirit of the class, and since we are only stating facts, perhaps one more letter of a different character may not be uninteresting. This second one was from a clever bold girl who had never had the remotest approach to a "*vocation for consecration*," as the children called it. She has left the Asylum some time, and is since respectably married.

“My dear little Sister,

It is but a few words I have to say to you. The happy day has at length arrived to unite you to God : what happiness you must feel in giving your young years to Him who will be a father and friend to you for ever. But I need not tell you what you know, my dear little sister. A few days now and we shall be separated, perhaps for ever. I must go to that deceitful world, and who knows but what I may be lost for ever. I beg of you to pray for me that I may persevere in virtue. I assure you, dear sister. I wish I were in your place. Oh ! I wish God would inspire me with the same grace and blessing He has you. I wish you every happiness and comfort you can receive in this world, and an eternity of happiness hereafter. Accept this book as a token of love and friendship from

Your affectionate Sister,

ODILLA.

Let me ask you as a favour to keep this book in remembrance of me. I beg your prayers.”

The Reverend Mother read some of the letters, and was glad to find such a spirit of cordiality towards Mary of the Seven Dolours. Whilst

Mary was walking with the Superioress, others out of respect kept away, but so soon as the letters had been examined sufficiently, the Reverend Mother called Valerie, and this was the signal for many others to crowd round the Mother Superior. Every one had something to say, and each wanted to be answered, and there was much noise, all talking together. The penitents played, but since dancing was strictly forbidden, or any such songs or games as might awaken dangerous remembrances in the minds of these poor young creatures, they were content to play at children's games, and the sound of laughter from the merry groups on the grass was enough to rejoice the heart of the looker on. It was very hot and they looked very hot, and their games were very fatiguing and heating, yet Mary of the Seven Dolours, wishing to make herself agreeable and be cordial with all, joined one of the groups which with much strength was moving round at a rapid rate. She got very much heated, and then sat down awhile on the grass; the Mother Superior having gone in, she returned again to the rough play, and again became very much heated, and was so thoughtless as to seat herself on the grass once more to

cool herself. Neither did she till the next day find how much she had injured herself. She was obliged to go to the infirmary with one of her worst attacks of inflammation. From that bed she may be said never to have risen. For weeks and weeks Mr. Barrett did all that his great kindness and great skill could suggest, but without giving from the first the least hope of her ultimate recovery. She, however, was able to be dressed, and during some of the fine days of Autumn was seated in a soft chair in a sunny spot in the garden. She asked and was permitted, from time to time, to go to the penitents' burying ground. It was a sweet silent spot. From the Convent windows can be seen the cross on Mary of the Seven Dolours' grave, and poor dear sufferer, many is the time that she would herself consider where she would be buried. After the sickness she fell into on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, the Superioress thought it right to acquaint her of her danger, her approaching death, and the probably recent date that her first consecration would have. My dear child, you will die in favour with God, and He will most surely, according to His promise, have mercy. You have not been forced to take

this step from the fear of death, for though we have long seen your failing health, *you* made your generous sacrifice when you thought you might live for years." "Indeed, Mother Superior, I thought I should ; I was not at all aware I was in danger. Do you think," she added with trembling accents, "that if I had not sat on the grass on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen I perhaps might have recovered from all my my other illness?" "Do not reproach yourself with that, my dear child, it was imprudent, but you have no reason to be uneasy thinking you have been guilty of contributing to your own death ; Mr. Barrett has assured me that you would not have lived long without this last attack of illness." Mary of the Seven Dolours was silent. The Superioress looked at her, and was silent too. Mary of the Seven Dolours spoke first ; after giving a deep sigh she said, "It is an awful thing to die so young." "It is more awful to die old, and not the friend of God : had you been left in the world, you would perhaps have died in a still more dreadful manner young and in mortal sin. My dear child, make the sacrifice of your life generously, you are spared from many dangers, and you will die here with

great advantages. Tell me, have you not since you have been in the Asylum had cause to be thankful to God for His mercy?" "Oh, indeed I have; I have often said to myself, if I had a thousand lives I would give them one after the other to thank God for His great goodness to me. The joy I have experienced in His service is so great; and to think how little I have done to merit it,—such resistance to His graces,—such infidelity in His service; yes, indeed Mother Superior, I have been very ungrateful." "Now compose yourself, my dear child, I must go to dinner, and let me find you to-morrow quite calm and in peace. Would you like Valerie to come and sit by your bedside during the recreation?" "Yes, very much, and dear Mother Superior, give me your blessing, and pray for your poor child."

After dinner, at the nuns' recreation, the Reverend Mother recounted what had passed in the children's infirmary, and many remarks of kind sympathy were uttered by the compassionate religious. Perceiving, however, that the conversation was becoming too serious for a recreation, the Reverend Mother, to turn it into a brighter course, said, "Are you

better, Sister Mary of St. Gervais?" Sister Mary of St. Gervais rose from her seat, and with a look of whimsical confusion, replied, "Oh! ma mère, you not tell of that new schile!" "Why not; I am sure our sisters will condole with you." Sister Mary of St. Gervais resigned herself; she knew what was coming. "Well, my dear sisters," said the Reverend Mother, "I will tell you of a little misfortune which has happened to-day to Sister Mary of St. Gervais. The new child sent by the Rev. Mr. O'Neal seemed more pleased than some of them are with the costume, or perhaps she found our good sister more agreeable than ever; but what her motive was I leave you to guess. When dressed ready to go to the class, in the excess of her gratitude, after all she had said she actually kissed Sister Mary of St. Gervais." There was a general burst of laughter, not loud, nor long, but it was right down laughter, and it was not a little increased by the pitiful face of the French lay-sister. She turned a little red, and did not know whether to laugh or cry between the amusement she could not help feeling and the mortification of being kissed by a "schile." The jest was prolonged by the

way in which the Reverend Mother described her coming to her with such a face of concern. The Reverend Mother innocently exaggerated all the ridiculous circumstances to please the community, who laughed afresh every time there was something said which would bring to mind the confusion of this good religious at such an outbreak of feeling on the part of this untaught penitent, who had yet to learn the distance kept between the religious and their poor adopted children. "But," said the Reverend Mother, "you love the penitents very much, Sister Mary of St. Gervais, do you not?" "Yes, *ma mère*, *me* love the soul, not the body." "But we must take care of their bodies too." "Yes, *ma mère*, *me* give them clean caps; this never happen before." The conversation having thus taken a more cheerful strain, the recreation went on as usual, and many more recreations and days and weeks passed, as they were often passed in the Convent, in peace and content, but without any marked event. Captain Ambrose had been ordered with his regiment to Edinburgh, and thus had not been present at his daughter's consecration; he wrote her, how-

ever, a very kind and affectionate letter, and it was a great happiness to him. When informed of his daughter's danger, he got leave of absence and hastened to Hammersmith, and it was a heart-rending sight to see their meeting, and still more their parting. In this world they never met again. Surely Almighty God intended to purify the soul of this poor frail child to make it fit to appear before Him, for she lay in suffering for months, and her beloved father, unable to get further leave, could only write and write again and again. But Mary of the Seven Dolours, in the long sleepless nights began to think she clung too fondly to earth and its ties, and she begged the Reverend Mother the next time her father wrote not to give her the letter. Now that she was dying there was no restriction put upon Valerie's visits; she came every day and read to, or conversed with, the dying girl. Mary of the Seven Dolours was so thin, that her bones in places broke through the skin before she died, and her tearing cough seemed as if it would at every effort suffocate her, yet never a word of complaint, never a murmur or impatient movement

escaped her. She had lost all terror of death, and was only anxious, as she told Valerie, not to die at night because it would disturb the nuns to come to her, and she knew they would do so, if her agony lasted all night. But she had no agony, dear child, so to speak. Her death-bed was a most beautiful sight! Nothing frightful, no death struggle—the lamp of light going out with a gentle flicker. The last conscious words she spoke were to the Mother Superior—"God bless you, Mother Superior,"—and then she lost her speech, and breathed heavily and with difficulty, till the last few sobs of expiring nature. Her gentle eyes turned from one to another of her companions, (a few were permitted to be present at her death,) and she bowed a faint smiling adieu to them after she had lost the use of speech. Her face had never become thin, and thus there was nothing painful in her appearance. It was a sight to touch a heart of adamant, and when the soul had gone to God, and the poor helpless clay lay there, could Valerie be blamed for giving way to a violent burst of anguish? Except her loud lamentations no sound was heard in that chamber

of death. Captain Ambrose was able to attend the funeral, and the solemn procession which followed the corpse to the burying ground was most striking.

Every penitent, dressed in her neatest dress, carried a lighted taper, the religious walked two and two in their long mantles, chaunting the funeral service, the afflicted father followed ; and who shall describe *his* feelings as he threw holy-water, when it was lowered into the grave, on the coffin that contained the remains of his beloved child ? Every, the slightest particular of her last hours which the Reverend Mother could tell him, he eagerly listened to ; and he had much consolation amidst his grief, to hear of the holy preparation his child had made, and the blessed death she had died. “ She used to say,” added the Reverend Mother, “ that she was almost afraid to find how little fear of God she had—she had such a *confidence* in His mercy as I have rarely seen equalled. She once told me that her only sorrow was not to have lived to make her second—her ‘perpetual consecration.’ ”

Such was the end of Mary of the Seven Dolours, a type of a class whose solid conversions

are the rewards of the nuns of the Order of the Good Shepherd. There are, who will not believe that the penitents ever become reformed, but the above story is but one out of many which might be written, all different in their circumstances, but equally interesting, equally true, equally consoling to the nuns in the midst of their labours. Sweet labours! May they be grateful to God for their vocation to this favoured order where the sweet charity of their dear Saviour is humbly imitated. Teach them, O God, to love their duties, to rejoice that they can labour in such a cause! Teach them to feel for the sinner, to pray for her, to hope for her, and because the Son of God has died for her, let none despise the fallen creature whom the Almighty bears with.

Oh, charity, charity! where art thou hidden in this degenerate age, that so few feel for that worst of all misfortunes the *sin* of their fellow-creature. But if seen through a Christian medium, who will, who can, turn from the frail being, perhaps less guilty *in the sight of God* than those who condemn? Who, for instance, who walks down the garden of the Convent of the Good Shep-

herd, at Hammersmith, and reads on the cross of the last-made grave, "Pray for the soul of Mary of the Seven Dolours, who departed this life on the 8th of February, 184—, aged 23"—who will venture to point the finger of scorn at the grave of the "Penitent of the Good Shepherd?"

Requiescat in pace.



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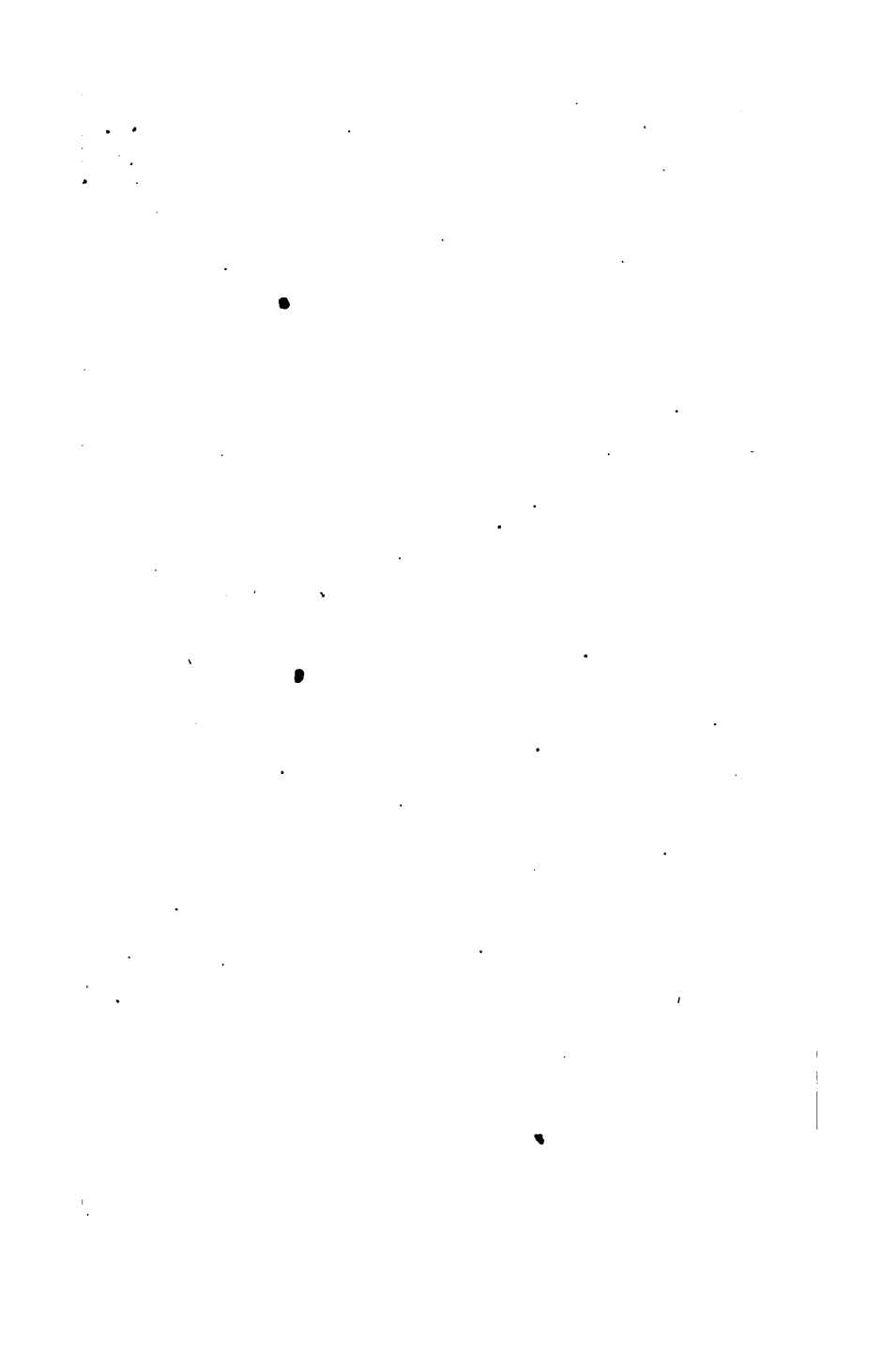
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